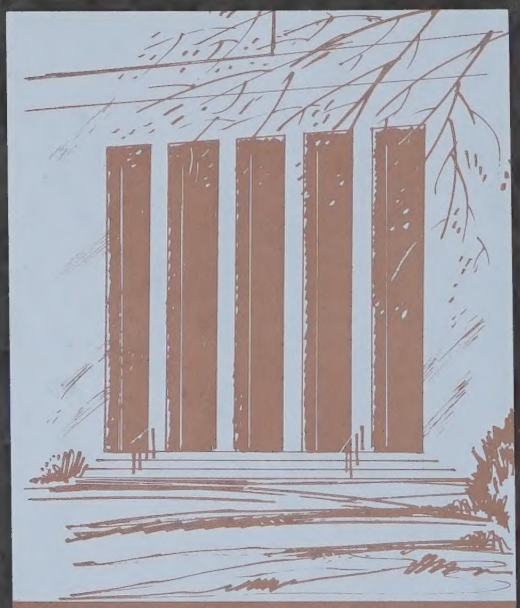
# MILLAIS

MASTER-PAINTERS
of THE WORLD



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# JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS

MASTER-PAINTERS
OF THE WORLD

Painted 1876.

Exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1877.

A YEOMAN OF THE GUARD

*In the National Gallery British Art.*

# JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS

1829 1896

*By*

ARTHUR FISH

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# INTRODUCTION

MILLAIS died in 1896, a generation ago. Much has happened since then. The world in general has changed. Revolutions have transformed its social and political life. Kingdoms have disappeared and new nations have been established. The Arts, in common with all else, have passed through many phases during those nearly thirty years. Literature, painting, and sculpture have, indeed, been affected by not one but several revolutions since the men who made the nineteenth century notable in these spheres passed to the Great Beyond. True, that in many respects they were merely tinsel revolutions; establishing no great principles in the stead of those they displaced—or, rather, ignored; revolutions based on passing whims, which quickly gave place to others equally ephemeral, the sum effect of which has been to leave the world wondering as to what the next "ism" will be to dominate for the time being the domain of Art. Instability of belief has succeeded the orthodoxy which characterized the mid-nineteenth century art doctrine. The mid-Victorian Age was marked by the solidity of its popular belief in its leaders in literature and art; the certainty that what they did was right; that the work expected of them would in due course be presented. But we have changed all this. The feature of the "Georgian" era is its unexpectedness. There is no stabilized "school"; instead there are individuals, each anxious for notice, and the one who screams the loudest secures the most attention. The author who pays the least regard to the rules of syntax and composition, the painter who disregards most the niceties of drawing and the harmonies of colour—he is king, for the moment, and receives the fashionable plaudits. Their reign is of brief duration, for their successor is on their heels with an even louder scream, an even more bizarre effect ere the echo of the acclamation has died away.

The Georgian period, indeed, up to the moment of writing, has proved a period of experimentalism in art; with a seething ferment of theories

hastily and oftentimes clumsily expounded in a practice that has but served to prove the frail foundations on which the theories have been based—"a striving and a striving" that has ended in "nothing": which has not added anything tangible to the art knowledge of the world, and has produced no work important enough to mark the period distinctively and unmistakably.

How, then, do the great men of the art of the mid-nineteenth century, with their thoroughness, their adherence to sound principles, their steadfast faith in their work stand to-day? The Victorian era, by the unthinking and ignorant, is dismissed with a sneer, a shrug of the shoulders, an expression of contempt: to those who possess the comparative faculty, who are not carried away by the nervous excitability of our day, the case is otherwise. They recognize that the men of that time understood the great basic principles of the art they expounded, whether it was literature, painting, or sculpture; they realized the necessity of sound craftsmanship in their work and were not ashamed to exercise it; even when at times, the craftsman overshadowed the artist, it was but the exaggerated expression of the desire that their work should be of their best. Dickens, Thackeray, Tennyson, Millais, Leighton, Burne-Jones, stand as representatives of their generation; a generation which cannot be obscured, which cannot be dismissed with a cheap epigram.

Millais's reputation has undoubtedly stood the test of Time, and he is recognized as one of the great men in his country's art. Not all his work counts to-day, and not the work, perhaps, by which he himself set great store; certainly not the work by which he secured his greatest worldly profit. Indeed, his most enduring work has proved to be that for which he was most condemned by contemporary critics. In his time he, too, was a revolutionist, and it is chiefly by his revolutionary works that he lives to-day. They mark a distinct period in English art as emphatically as does the great Reform Bill in the political history of the country. They represented the sincere expression of sincere beliefs, and it is this overwhelming sincerity of purpose and practice that has secured their author his niche among the Immortals.

To see the pictures that were produced under this revolutionary impulse at the Tate Gallery, at the Birmingham and Manchester Art Galleries is to realize their strength in comparison with the conventional work that

immediately preceded them, and especially with the work of the revolutionists of to-day. Millais and his little company of fellow Pre-Raphaelites drew their inspiration from the "Primitives" who worked before Raphael; they decided that Art should once more rely upon Nature; that everything they painted should be based upon and be true to Nature; it was a revival of the Gospel of Thoroughness which had inspired the earlier painters of Italy. They did not ape the Primitives; they did not imitate their crudities, but by employing all the experience of the ages they emulated their desire to produce only what was true and what was beautiful according to their lights. And they succeeded. Their work was the outcome of their day; it was not "early Italian," nor an imitation thereof. There are "neo-Primitives" to-day in painting and sculpture, but the prehistoric bone-scratchings of the cave-man put their work to shame; the latter tried to express pictorially the things he saw in the world around him : his ignorance of drawing was not assumed, it was real ; but his efforts were evidently so sincere that the imperfections of his work are not insisted upon. The "neo-Primitives" of to-day cannot plead ignorance of the methods of achievement; they ignore them and deliberately strive to secure the distorted effects that were the outcome of the sincere ignorance of the cave-man artist. A failure that bears evidence of an underlying sincerity of purpose can be condoned, but a failure that is glaringly insincere from start to finish bears its own condemnation.

The art revolutionaries of the 'fifties were vilified by the critics—with one notable exception for a short time—and discouraged by the Academy; but they survived the onslaughts of the critics and the official snubbings, and in the end secured the approbation of the great public. The experimentalists of to-day have been belauded by the critics and recognized by the authorities. It has to be seen whether the public will accept the dicta of the critics and follow the lead of the official keepers of the nation's art conscience—or whether, as in the case of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, it determines to go its own way, indifferent to the superiority of the critics and the decisions of the official eclectics. "Isabella," "Ophelia," "The Order of Release," "The Vale of Rest," and other of Millais's works of these revolutionary days are declaimed by the critics of to-day—though from another standpoint—as vigorously as they were by those who were contemporary with the artist; but they receive more attention in the public

galleries than do the bewildering productions of the experimentalists who, for the moment, are in official favour. A visit to the Tate Gallery will prove the truth of this statement.

The whole record of Millais's work is an amazing one and suggests a life of unremitting toil—and yet we know that when prosperity came as much time as possible was spent away from the studio, in Scotland particularly. There are listed by his son in his "Life and Letters of Sir John E. Millais" a total of 396 oil paintings—of which 150 are portraits—and 55 water-colours, of which 14 are portraits. In addition, there were, between 1859 and 1864, innumerable black and white drawings made on wood for publishers for the engravers to work over. Of these, 87 were done as illustrations to Anthony Trollope's novels—30 drawings of "The Parables," a considerable number appeared in *Good Words*, and many others, done for various publishers, have to be sought for in magazines of the period. More than a hundred engravings of his pictures were published, the first of which to be issued was "The Huguenot" (in 1856). "The Black Brunswicker" and "The Proscribed Royalist," issued in 1868, were probably more widely distributed than any pictures of that period—or any other.

In this review of his life there is no intent to glorify his work at the expense of truth : it is an effort to present the record of his achievement calmly and dispassionately. After an interval of twenty-seven years we are at a sufficient distance to consider it without either prejudice or bias. The mere fact that after this lapse of time it is felt there is a sufficiently great interest in his work to warrant the re-telling of his story, with reproductions of some of his more important pictures, is evidence enough that his influence is still a force with the great public.

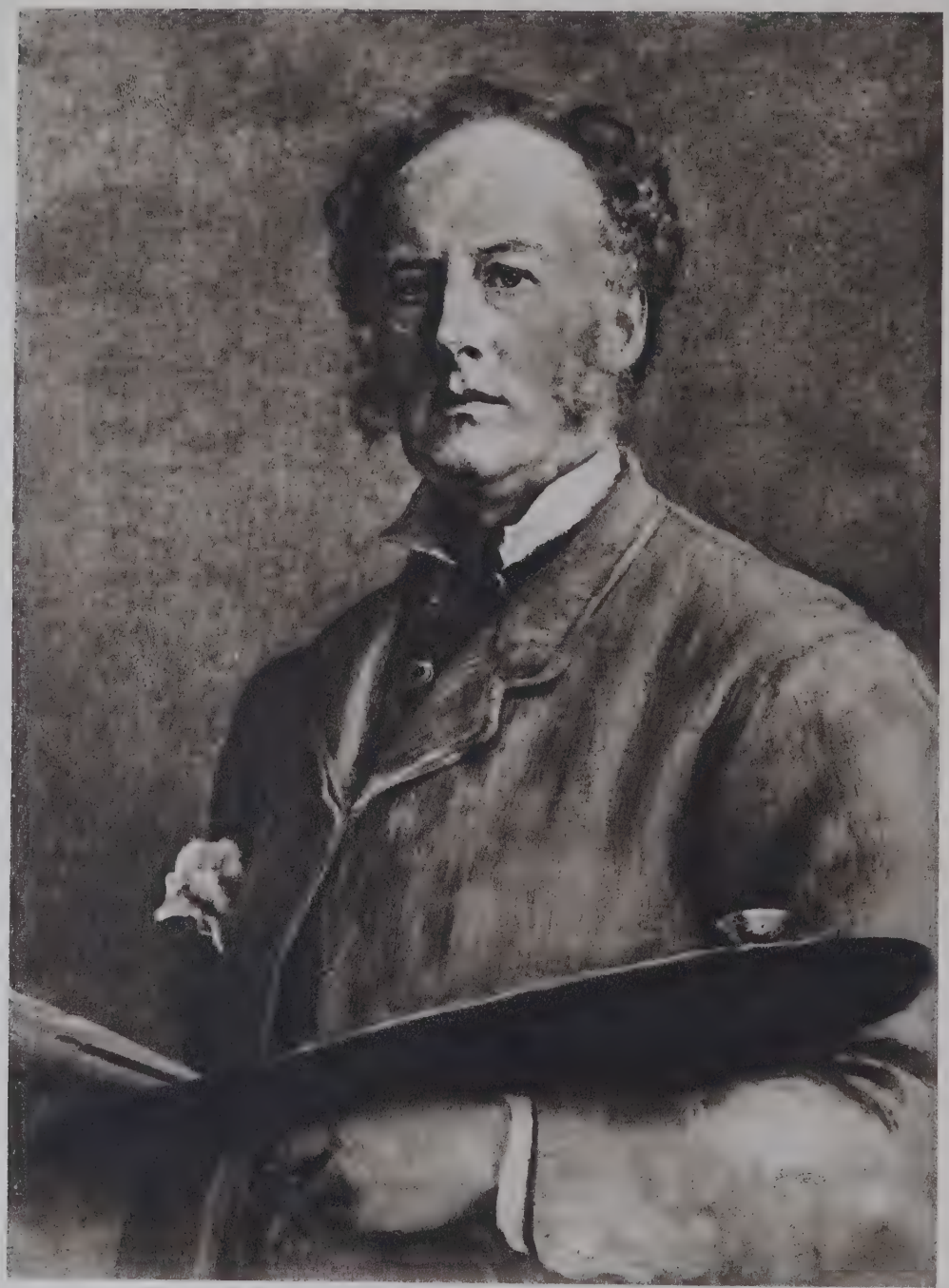

*Photo : Alinari.*

SIR JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS, BART., P.R.A.

*From the Portrait by Himself in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

# JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS

## CHAPTER I

### A Precocious Childhood

MILLAIS, like Wilkie, Lawrence, and several other "born" artists, could draw before he could write. At four years of age he produced sketches which attracted attention by their fidelity to the objects depicted, which, of course, were hailed by his mother particularly, as signs of genius, to be fostered and encouraged. His father, John William Millais, a native of Jersey, was himself possessed of an abounding artistic temperament, fairly skilled in drawing and painting, and an excellent musician, so that the youngster was not thwarted in any way in the development of his talent. It was at Southampton, on June 8, 1829, that John Everett Millais was born, the youngest of three children; but soon afterwards the family returned to Jersey and made their home on the outskirts of St. Heliers. At the first the child's trend of mind seemed to be towards natural history, but it was not long before the craving to draw overcame all else, and pencil and paper were ready on every and any occasion to meet it.

There was one attempt at school life which ended in failure. The master was about to administer punishment, the child refused to accept it and turned on the master. Result: expulsion. The mother thereupon herself undertook his education—which she had begun before the school experiment. She was an accomplished and gifted woman; she had the utmost belief in the ability of her boy, and guided his studies along the path which was most likely to lead to the goal she desired he should attain.

Fortunately the youngster's love for drawing remained fast: it was no infantile whim. Everything that attracted his attention was recorded on paper, and, with this constant practice, by the time he was six he could depict faithfully and unmistakably the features of his relatives and friends.

When in his seventh year the whole family migrated to Dinan, in

Brittany, and here young Millais found subjects of delight in plenty for his pencil. Endless streams of soldiers in all kinds of uniforms afforded continuous opportunity for the exercise of his pencil, and Mr. J. G. Millais, in his "Life" of his father, records an interesting instance of the success of his efforts. The boy and his brother, William, were one day—as usual—watching and sketching the soldiers, when a huge drum-major came upon the scene and was immediately marked for attention. Absorbed in his task, young John did not notice that he was being watched by two officers ; they could not repress an exclamation of astonishment when they saw the finished sketch. They praised the boy, asked where he lived, and on being pressed by his brother to go home with them, they went, and did their utmost to persuade the parents to send their son to the schools in Paris. The sketch was taken to the barracks, but the statement that it was by a boy of six was entirely disbelieved. Bets were laid, and young Millais was sent for to prove his work. This he did by sketching the colonel as he sat smoking a cigar. The losers had to "stand" dinner to the mess.

After two years in Dinan the return to Jersey was made, and then the boy received his first tuition from a drawing master; but after a very little while the master dismissed his pupil, and told the parents that he had nothing to teach their son and advised his being sent to London to study. In 1838—that is to say, when Millais was nine years old—the journey was made. It was a great undertaking ; boat to Southampton, then coach to London. Of course, the inevitable pencil and paper were in evidence with so much to see that was new and exciting. An old gentleman fellow-passenger in the coach fell asleep, and was promptly sketched. He awoke just as the finishing touches were being put and caught sight of the portrait. He was a good judge and expressed his pleasure to Mrs. Millais at the cleverness of it. He offered to give her an introduction to the President of the Society of Arts, which duly came in a letter signed Joseph Paxton.

But the primary goal was the Royal Academy and its President. The story is well known. Sir Martin Archer Shee, when the purpose of the interview was disclosed, smothered all hope with his gruff, "Better make him a chimney sweep"; but after he had seen some of the drawings treasured by the mother and had witnessed the execution of a sketch in his august presence, that verdict was quashed and the declaration given that Nature had without question intended the child for an artist.

The die was thus definitely cast; the boy of nine became a student, drawing from the antique in the galleries of the British Museum, and in the winter he entered Sass's school in Bloomsbury. He worked hard and competed against his full-fledged fellow-students without any hesitancy. His first great victory was gained before his tenth birthday, for with a drawing of "The Battle of Bannockburn" he secured the silver medal of the Society of Arts. The surprise of everyone, from the aged Duke of Sussex—who distributed the prizes—downwards, may be imagined when, in response to the call for "Mr. John Everett Millais," a little boy dressed in "a white plaid tunic, with black belt and buckle, short white frilled trousers showing bare legs, with white socks and patent leather shoes, a large white frilled collar, a bright necktie and his hair in golden curls," stepped up to the dais.

The family had removed to London and taken up residence in Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square; the centre of its orbit was the boy artist. His education was still carried on by his mother; he did not go to any other school than that in which he received his art training—all else he learned from his home teacher. No wonder that in after years he placed it on record, "I owe everything to my mother."

On December 12, 1840, when he was eleven years of age, he was admitted to the Royal Academy Schools, the youngest student that has ever been placed on the rolls.*

The Academy was then housed in a part of the National Gallery building, and it is in but comparatively recent years that the doorway nearest to St. Martin's Lane bore over its portals the words, "Royal Academy of Arts."

W. P. Frith, in his "Reminiscences," recorded his impression of Millais's entry into the schools thus: "I can well remember the amusement of the students—some of whom were then, as now, middle-aged men—when a little handsome boy, dressed in a long blue coat confined at the waist by a black leather band, walked into the Antique School and gravely took his place among them."

Here, then, the boy worked through the usual routine of the Academy student—drawing from the antique, the life, in crayon, pencil, and colour; spending his leisure time—what there was of it—in company with his brother in the National Gallery or at Lord's Cricket Ground, or starting off

*Mr. J. G. Millais states that 1839 was the year of his admission to the schools, but I prefer to take the definite date given in the catalogue of the Royal Academy Memorial Exhibition of 1898.

in the early hours of the morning for a day's fishing in the New River, where it flowed through the fields of Hornsey. And all the time the passion for observing and recording was exercised. The cricketers at Lord's—in top hats—scenes in the family circle ; people who attracted his attention in the streets were drawn from memory after he had reached home ; nothing escaped him that was worth noticing—everything was used to meet his insatiable appetite for drawing.

The schools were under the direction of the Keeper of the Academy—at that time George Jones, R.A., a painter of battle pictures that are almost unknown to the present generation, and the members of the Academy acted as "Visitors," which generally meant that, after posing the model in the life class, they would sit and read for the two hours they were on duty. But seldom was it that they criticized or gave helpful suggestions to the students. Of Etty it is told that he used to take a place amongst them and draw assiduously from the model, to the disgust of some of his fellow-Academicians, who thought he was not upholding the dignity of his position. But he secured the admiration of the students and influenced their work very greatly for many years.

The boy Millais worked diligently to perfect himself in the technical equipment for the artist life. Known to his fellow-students as "The Child," he gained their respect for the excellence of his work, but as the youngest among them he was appointed "fag," and in that capacity had to fetch their lunch from a near-by pastrycook's. Collecting their pence, he would set off and come back loaded with forty or fifty buns, one of which was generally awarded to him as commission.

A year after entering the schools he made his first essay in oil-painting, "Cupid Crowned with Flowers," a small canvas, 23 in. by 18 in., of a full-length female figure seated on a bank in a forest and placing a wreath of wild flowers on Cupid's head, who is standing with one elbow resting on her knee. In the same year he did a remarkable water-colour drawing (35 in. by 46 in.) of an incident in "Peveril of the Peak." It represents the interior of a chapel with an illegal conventicle meeting. It is crowded with figures, all of which, together with the architecture, bear testimony to the wonderful skill of the boy as a draughtsman.

# CHAPTER II

## The Successful Student

FOR the next three or four years the boy's life may be described as one of diligent effort to perfect himself in the practice of his art. Work at the schools, work in the galleries of the British Museum, work at home in his "off" time from regular study. He gained all the prizes that were possible during his period in the schools, including the coveted medal for a series of drawings from the antique. This was in 1843, when he was but fourteen years of age, with competitors much older than himself. Holman Hunt, in his "Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," gives a vivid description of the scene at the distribution of the prizes. He tells how there was hot discussion among the students as to whom the medals would be awarded, and opinion seemed to be divided whether Millais would get the first or second—one or other was certain; his runner-up was a student named Fox, a man of thirty years of age.

"When the clock was near striking, all the students took their places in the lecture room . . . no eyes were long withdrawn from the door, where, by the curtains, stood the gorgeous porter dressed in scarlet. After a protracted time he put aside his saucy assumption of indifference, threw open the doors, and the procession entered, led by the stately Keeper, Mr. Jones (the President at the time being an invalid), while at his left hand walked a stunted gentleman, unimposing in form, inelegantly dressed, and shambling in gait. Part of his ungracefulness was attributable to a big head, with somewhat large features, which, although not handsome, bespoke the right to be at home in any presence. Behind came some few men of dignified bearing and appearance . . . Leslie, Howard, and Ross, all courtly-looking gentlemen. Next came Stanfield, Roberts, Webster, Mulready, who was then of perfect build and beautiful face, and Maclise, who was singularly handsome. . . . Etty, with a great brow and modest deportment, though short and stout, looked distinguished. I turned again with curiosity as to his personality, to the inelegant but honoured member in front, who had

then stopped with the Keeper just in face of the rostrum. Mr. Jones could be seen bowing (he could not be heard by reason of the ovation) and with extended hands gracefully inviting the unknown one on his left to ascend and take the duties of the evening. He, however, merely shook himself like an unwilling child; being pressed further in the most courteous manner by the Deputy-President, he betrayed some irritation in his further gesticulations; his coat-tails swept from side to side and he brought the matter to a close by hurrying to a seat placed with its back to the audience. This was J. M. W. Turner. Mr. Jones waited to catch his eye, then bowed, ascended to the chair, and commenced his address. Then the distribution of the medals followed, a function which seemed of eternal moment to the students. When it came to the turn of the Antique School, attention was breathless as the preliminary words were uttered slowly, and the name of John Everett Millais was given as the winner of the first prize. A moment's pause, and out of the press a thin lad with curly hair and a white collar arose eagerly, and was handed from seat to seat till he descended into the arena, where, remembering his manners, he bowed and approached the desk. As he returned the applause was boisterous."

His particular rival was awarded the second medal, and was so piqued that at first he refused to go up and receive it, but the other students clamoured until he did so.

This was the first acquaintance of Holman Hunt with Millais—the first episode in a companionship that was to develop into one of historic importance. Hunt, himself fettered to an office life that was both uncongenial and irksome, was hungering for opportunity to satisfy his artistic cravings. He had for some time been working at every available moment in the British Museum and had twice tried unsuccessfully to gain admission to the Academy Schools, but his self-taught methods of drawing failed to find favour with the authorities. One more opportunity was given him by his father to try for the coveted studentship, but that was to be the final; if failure again resulted he was to settle down to a commercial career. Behold him, then, striving to gain the mastery of this drawing from the cast to satisfy the meticulous demands of the Academy. It was the summer following the first sight of the successful Millais. The galleries of the museum were deserted—other students were holidaying. Absorbed in his work in the Sculpture Gallery, he hardly noticed a boy who turned aside to look over

his shoulder at his drawing, pondered it for a few minutes and went on his way. Glancing aside, he caught sight of the figure and recognized it for the lad who had taken the medal at the Academy. Later in the day Hunt, passing through the Elgin Room, saw Millais at work, and in turn he glanced at the drawing in progress. To his surprise, the boy stopped and spoke to him.

"I say, are not you the fellow doing that good drawing in number thirteen room? You ought to be at the Academy."

"That is exactly my opinion," Hunt replied, "but, unfortunately, the Council have twice decided the other way."

"You just send in the drawing you are doing now, and you'll be in like a shot. You take my word for it; I ought to know. I've been a student for five years. I got the first medal last year in the Antique, and it's not the first given me, I can tell you."

Followed a talk on the technicalities of drawing from the antique, then a sudden question from the boy: "I say, tell me whether you have begun to paint? What? I'm never to tell; it is your deadly secret. Ha, ha, ha, that's a good joke! You'll be drawn and quartered without having been respectably hung by the Council of Forty if you are known to have painted before completing your first course in the Antique. Why, I'm as bad as you, for I've painted a long while. I say, do you ever sell what you do? So do I. I've often got ten pounds, and even double. Do you paint portraits?"

"Yes," replied Hunt, "but I'm terribly behind you."

"How old are you?"

"Well, I'm seventeen."

"I'm only fifteen, just struck; but don't you be afraid. Why, there are students at the Academy just fifty or more."

Hunt got his probationership and ultimately passed into the Academy Schools, but it was some time before the friendship with Millais was renewed.

As he had told Hunt, Millais had begun to earn something towards his living; in 1845 he was offered, and accepted, a contract from Serjeant Thomas, a retired lawyer, who dabbled in art dealing. For £100 a year he was to devote every Saturday to doing such work as his patron might desire—paint small pictures or merely backgrounds for other men, etc.

The contract was for two years, but it was not carried through. The boy chafed under the restrictions, he resented the manner of his employer, and the climax came when reproof was administered for ten minutes' unpunctuality. The reproof was long and galling. Millais, who had meantime prepared his palette, could stand no more. The palette was sent hurtling through the air and barely missed Thomas's head. It struck the wall and slithered down to the floor, leaving a trail of colour in its wake. There was a brief reconciliation, with a £50 increase of remuneration; but the independence of spirit was too great, and Millais went about the business of earning his living in his own way.

In 1846 Millais, then in his seventeenth year, made his first appearance in the Royal Academy Exhibition with an oil-painting entitled "Pizarro Seizing the Inca of Peru," a work which gained high praise from a distinguished French critic who declared it to be one of the two best historical paintings of the year. It is an extraordinary accomplishment for a boy of this age, as may be proved by a visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum, where it has hung for many years as a bequest from Mr. Hodgkinson. His father sat as model for several of the figures, and friends of the family were impressed into service for others.

In 1847 there fell to him the most coveted prize of the schools, the gold medal for historical painting, the subject for competition being "The Young Men of the Destroyed Tribe of Benjamin Seizing their Destined Brides in the Vineyards."

In 1847 he was again represented in the Royal Academy Exhibition with "Elgiva Seized by Order of Archbishop Odo," but his most important venture was his entry for the competition for the decoration of the Houses of Parliament. He was by a long way the youngest of all the competitors, and had pitted against him such men as G. F. Watts, C. W. Cope, Edward Armitage, John Tenniel, Noel Paton, and J. C. Horsley, most of whom had already gained reputations. Millais chose for his subject "The Widow's Mite," and painted a huge cartoon, 14 ft. by 10 ft. 3 in., which almost filled his studio and occupied him for nearly a year. The decision was adverse and the cartoon was returned to him. After being on exhibition for some years at the Pantheon it was cut into two and sold thus, in instalments as it were, one of which went to the United States.

But if he failed at Westminster he succeeded at Leeds, for he received

a commission to go to the northern town and paint a series of panels for the house now known as "The Judge's Lodgings."

It was then in the possession of a Mr. Atkinson, a solicitor, who in 1847 added a wing to the house which contained a circular hall and staircase. The hall was laid with a tessellated pavement designed by Owen Jones, who also furnished a design for the decoration of the dome and walls to harmonize with his pavement. There were four doors opening on to the hall, and over each of these was a lunette in which a painting was to be placed. On the landing above were two similar doorways. Mr. Atkinson wrote to his friend, C. W. Cope, R.A., and asked him to recommend an Academy student who was competent to design and paint subjects to fill the six spaces. Cope, who was one of the successful competitors for the Westminster decorations, sent a recommendation that young Millais should be commissioned to do the work; his suggestion was adopted, and Millais invited to stay at the house while the work was in progress. So for some weeks he lived with the family and painted. The four designs for the hall doorways represented "Childhood," "Youth," "Manhood," and "Age" the two upstairs, "Music" and "Art." They were painted in oils on canvas, the figures in sepia on a blue background. The canvases were then affixed to the plaster in the lunettes without frames. There they remained until 1896, when it was decided to remove them to the Corporation Art Gallery. They were detached from the plaster and carefully remounted in lunette frames. Leeds thus possesses the earliest of the artist's work to be found in any of the provincial galleries.

To 1847, too, belongs the "Cymon and Iphigenia," which reveals the great influence of Etty on Millais at this time. Apart from the cartoon of "The Widow's Mite," it was the largest work attempted by the painter up till now. On a canvas 44 in. by 57 in. was painted a group of eleven figures, with a dog, illustrating Dryden's lines :

> His hand she long deny'd,
> But took at length, ashamed of such a guide;
> So Cymon led her home.

As a painting of a classic subject the picture cannot be accounted a success, and it is no matter for surprise that it was rejected by the Selecting Committee of the next Academy exhibition. But the picture is of great interest

to this part of the artist's story, for it was in its painting that the friendship with Holman Hunt was fully cemented and the foundations laid of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The two young painters were each working feverishly on their pictures for the forthcoming exhibition when Millais made the proposal that Hunt should come to his studio—he was then established at 83 Gower Street—where they could paint uninterruptedly. This Hunt did, and the two worked side by side, oftentimes long after all others in the house had retired to bed. Worked and talked—of their work, of their views on the art of their day—and other days—expressing opinions with the candour and conceit of youth : two sincere seekers after truth.

At one time Millais tired of his picture and impetuously exclaimed : "Do, like a dear fellow, work out these folds [of drapery] for me. You shan't lose time, for I'll do one of the heads of your revellers for you." Hunt agreed, and while he elaborated Iphigenia's draperies, Millais painted a head and a hand in his picture.

By the time the Academy decision was known, Hunt and Millais had drawn up their plan of campaign for their Revolution.

# OPHELIA

" . . . Her clothes spread wide,
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up;
Which time, she chanted snatches of old tunes,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indu'd
Unto that element: but long it could not be,
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death."

—*Hamlet*, Act iv, Scene 7.

*Painted* 1852. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy*, 1852.

*In the National Gallery.*

## CHAPTER III

### The Founding of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

THERE is no question that at this point Holman Hunt—then nineteen years of age—had a dominating influence over Millais, his junior by two years. Hunt was a serious student of art; knew more of its history then than Millais probably ever did. In the course of their talks over their work Hunt expounded his views concerning the decadency of the art of their day; he quoted Constable's prophecy pronounced in 1822, that "There will be no genuine painting in England in thirty years." The period was nearly expired : could not something be done to avert the fulfilment of the prophecy? Was not the calamitous condition of the art of their country due to artists relying upon "dogmas evolved from man-made systems" rather than from "principles of design taught by Nature herself"?

Hunt had already put into practice, laboriously and conscientiously, the idea that he was trying to establish as a first great principle, and on his explaining it to Millais, who by instinct from the beginning had depended entirely upon Nature for the exercise of his talent for drawing, found in him an enthusiastic disciple.

Hunt had already assimilated the earlier volumes of Ruskin's "Modern Painters" and was enamoured of Keats, and while Millais was painting his "Cymon and Iphigenia" had introduced the poet to his notice, but Hunt confessed that his first attempt was "for the moment a ludicrous failure." While sitting in Millais's studio he had taken from his pocket a copy of "Isabella" and begun to read aloud some of his favourite stanzas, but after a short time Millais broke in with "It's like a parson," and the séance came to an abrupt ending.

Keats was then "undiscovered" and Holman Hunt records that he bought his copies of the poems—first editions—at a second-hand bookseller's, where he had found them in the "four-penny box."

In a very little while, however, Hunt succeeded in rousing Millais to an enthusiasm for the poet nearly equal to his own, and the first work planned

for their new partnership was a series of drawings in illustration of "Isabella" with a view to their publication as etchings. But this is anticipating events. The two young painters had resolved to avoid all conventionalism in art—to base their work entirely upon Nature, to paint subjects as they actually occurred or probably would have occurred, to refuse all that was false or shoddy, to accept nothing but what was true. Millais would throw off the influence of Etty which had so dominated him in his last picture, and would devote himself for the future to working out the principles by which they had agreed mutually to abide.

Ruskin, in the second volume of "Modern Painters," had laid down precisely these principles for the guidance of young painters, but although Hunt had read this, we have Mr. J. G. Millais's authority for the statement that his father had never read a word of Ruskin until the famous letter appeared in *The Times* in 1851. There is not much question, however, that Hunt was greatly affected by Ruskin's work and his faith built up on his teachings. The particular passage in which the close adherence to Nature is enunciated is contained in Chapter 3, Volume 2 on "Modern Art and Criticism." It runs :—

"From young artists in landscape nothing ought to be tolerated but simple *bona fide* imitation of nature. They have no business to ape the execution of masters—to utter weak and disjointed repetitions of other men's words and mimic the gestures of the preacher, without understanding his meaning or sharing in his emotions. We do not want their crude ideas of composition, their unformed conceptions of the Beautiful, their unsystematized experiments upon the Sublime. We scorn their velocity, for it is without direction : we reject their decision, for it is without grounds : we contemn their composition, for it is without materials : we reprobate their choice, for it is without comparison. Their duty is neither to choose, to compare, nor imagine, nor experimentalize; but to be humble and earnest in following in the steps of Nature, and tracing the finger of God. Nothing is so bad a symptom in the work of young artists, as too much dexterity of handling; for it is a sign that they are satisfied with their work, and have tried to do nothing more than they are able to do. Their work should be full of failures; for these are the signs of efforts. They . . . should go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and

remember her instruction, rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth."

This, then, was the basic principle which was to govern all their future work—truth to Nature. There was to be no slurring over details : every difficulty was to be faced and mastered before a work was held to be finished : all the conventions that had grown around the practice of art were to be ignored.

In his later years Holman Hunt confessed that there was "perhaps much boyish bumptiousness in our verdicts upon the old art and in our aspirations for the new," but of their enthusiasm and sincerity of purpose there can be no shadow of doubt.

Their convictions as to the symptoms of decadence in the later works of Raphael became deepened as they discussed and re-discussed the matter in the quietude of Millais's studio. "The Transfiguration" particularly was condemned for its "grandiose disregard of the simplicity of truth, the pompous posturing of the apostles, and the unspiritual attitudinizing of the Saviour." They even ventured to express their heretical opinions to their fellow-students, and one turned upon them with the remark : "Then you are Pre-Raphaelites."

The term applied in scorn was remembered when their pact was formed, and they agreed that it should be applied in all seriousness to their new movement.

It is at this juncture that Rossetti comes upon the scene in the story of Millais.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was then a student at the Royal Academy Schools, but a very irregular and erratic one. Holman Hunt had but a slight acquaintance with him, but Rossetti had congratulated him somewhat boisterously on his picture, "The Eve of St. Agnes," in the Academy exhibition of the year 1847. Hunt expresses the opinion that it was as much because of its being a subject from Keats as from any real admiration for it as a picture. Rossetti invited himself to Hunt's studio, where the first of his Pre-Raphaelite paintings, "Rienzi," was in progress. Hunt expounded the method and principles on which it was being painted, and Rossetti became on the moment an ardent supporter. He had until then been working in Ford Madox Brown's studio—whom he had carried by assault, as it were,

by methods similar to those he was now applying to Holman Hunt. He decried Brown to Hunt as unsympathetic, and complained of the rigour of his discipline towards his pupil. Would not Hunt allow him to come and work in *his* studio, where he could learn more of the gospel of truth to Nature which appealed to him so convincingly? The suggestion was impossible for the moment, for Hunt was then working in his father's house and had already one pupil. A little while afterwards a turn of fortune brought about the sale of his picture "The Eve of St. Agnes," and on the strength of it Hunt acquired the rental of a studio of his own. Rossetti then became importunate : he would share the expense if only Hunt would allow him to work with him, and Hunt at length agreed, and in the August of 1848 they took possession.

In the meantime Rossetti had been proclaiming to his friend Woolner, with all the exuberant enthusiasm of his Italian temperament, the wonderful theories and practice of art of Millais and Hunt. He insisted on his coming to "their" studio and showed him Hunt's drawings and the unfinished "Rienzi," with its exposition of Pre-Raphaelite methods. Hunt came in unexpectedly and exhibited his annoyance at this breach of good manners. However, after a talk with Woolner he accepted him as a candidate for their little fellowship of reformers.

Rossetti thus encouraged, suggested that his brother William, then a clerk in the Inland Revenue Department, should also be admitted as a member, justifying the proposal by the statement that William was working in the evenings drawing from the nude with a view to the serious study and practice of art. Further, he proposed as an additional member, James Collinson, who had been painting for some years, and under the influence of Rossetti's enthusiasm professed his admiration for, and acceptance of, the principles of the Pre-Raphaelite band.

The idea of the expansion of the membership was thus entirely Rossetti's and his rôle as recruiting officer entirely self-constituted. Hunt, on his part, suggested that as they were including other than working artists, his friend, F. G. Stephens, should be invited to join the circle, in the hope that he would become infected with their enthusiasm and qualify as an active member.

Millais meanwhile had been away in Leeds working on his panels, and until his return to London knew nothing of this recruiting campaign and

the resultant enlistments. He was very doubtful as to the advisability of it all when Hunt made him acquainted with the activities of Rossetti.

"I can't understand, so far, what you are after," he told Hunt. "I can quite see why Gabriel Rossetti, if he can paint, should join us, but I didn't know his brother was a painter. And then there's Woolner. Collinson'll certainly make a leader of a forlorn hope, won't he? And Stephens, too! Does he paint? Is the notion really to be put into practice?"

Hunt, in defence, replied: "Gabriel implored me to take him and teach him to paint, and he's such an eager fellow that my one doubt as to his success is that he may be ever beginning and never finishing. . . . It seems that lately he has seen a great deal of Woolner and talked to him of our plan of going direct to Nature for all things, and the sculptor expressed a desire to join us. I didn't know him, but now I think he might help to spread our principles in his branch. Next comes the *forlorn hope*: it appears that the Rossettis are much attached to him, and Gabriel, having taken possession of him, declares that he can attain to a higher kind of work than he has yet accomplished, and Collinson himself has been pressing me to get him accepted. . . . As to William Rossetti, Gabriel proposed that he, too, shall become an artist and join us. It is very late in life: he is as old as you, without having drawn at all yet, but his brother declares that he will soon make up for lost time. Now, these are proposed by Rossetti. The members grew so fast, and his confidence in our powers was so extensive, that I determined to put a limit to the number of probationary members, which I did by adding my nominal painting pupil, Stephens. So far, I have not been able to awaken in him the novice's indispensable passion, but being treated as a real artist may awaken his ambition."

Millais was not impressed by all this; his only comment was: "It is a heavy undertaking"; but he suggested that a meeting of all of them should be called in his studio to talk matters over fully.

The meeting was duly held at the Millais home in Gower Street, and Millais brought to its notice an album of engravings of the frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa—the work chiefly of Orcagna and Benozzo Gozzoli—which he declared entirely represented the principles he and Hunt were trying to re-establish. "This," he declared, "is what the Pre-Raphaelite clique should follow."

After further interchange of thought the association was formed. At

Rossetti's suggestion, the "Pre-Raphaelites" were turned into the "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," and that to mark their work they should place the letters "P.R.B." after their signatures, but that the significance of the mystic letters should remain a secret among them.

Holman Hunt, in his "Pre-Raphaelitism," thus summarizes the ideals of the Brotherhood : "The name of our Body was meant to keep in our minds our determination ever to do battle against the frivolous art of the day, which had for its ambition 'Monkeyana' ideas, 'Books of Beauty,' Chorister Boys whose forms were those of melted wax, with drapery of no tangible texture. The illustrations to Holy Writ were feeble enough to incline a sensible public to revulsion of sentiment, equally shallow were the approved imitations of the Greeks, and paintings that would ape Michael Angelo and Titian, with, as the latest innovation, through the Germans, designs that affected without sincerity, the naïveté of Perugino and the early Flemings."

Such, then, was the foundation of the movement which was to stay the decadence of English Art, and such the men on whom the movement depended for success. The seven who composed the Brotherhood at its conception never added to their number. William Rossetti and F. G. Stephens never did anything in the way of painting to justify their inclusion. The former remained in the Civil Service for some years : he acted in the capacity of secretary and was the editor of their magazine, *The Germ*, which made its appearance in 1849. He afterwards made some reputation as an art critic in *The Spectator* and as the historian of his more talented brother and sister.

F. G. Stephens, it is true, painted several pictures, two or three of which were exhibited and have been given prominence of doubtful merit in the Pre-Raphaelite room at the Tate Gallery. He very soon gave up the practice of art for that of criticism into which he introduced the profound sincerity that inspired the Brotherhood. The laborious care with which, in his later years, he examined the works at the Academy Press View afforded a very marked contrast with the hurried superficiality of the younger men, who went away and wrote abusive articles on the Academy and all its works.

Woolner in 1852 went gold-digging in Australia and did not return until 1855. He in time became a successful Royal Academician.

Collinson voluntarily seceded from the Brotherhood about 1850, after exhibiting but two pictures bearing the mystic letters "P.R.B." His work

## THE ORDER OF RELEASE, 1746

*Painted* 1853. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy*, 1853.
*In the National Gallery British Art.*

was at no time noteworthy, and his name is remembered only by his association with the Brotherhood.

Remains, then, the original trio—Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti. Their association and work were closely interwoven for several years, and references to the other two must perforce be made in dealing with Millais. It must, however, be stated that Rossetti was in nowise entitled to the prominence given him in the movement in later years. Even to-day there are many who think of him as the archetype of Pre-Raphaelitism. He very soon abandoned the principles of the Brotherhood : his individuality was too exuberant to be fettered by them ; he went his own way, and in that way found the real expression of his somewhat exotic soul. Essentially a poet, his painting was but a form of poetic expression : his genius was too eruptive to be bound by rules of technique ; his idealism was too rampant to be curbed with bit and bridle of principles adopted in a fit of youthful enthusiasm.

# CHAPTER IV

## Pre-Raphaelitism in Practice

THE panels for Leeds were finished in the early autumn of 1848, and then attention was absorbed in a portrait of Mr. W. Hugh Fenn, which Holman Hunt states "was so strong in form and finish, and so rich in well-justified colour, that it resembled a perfect Van Eyck or Holbein." It was not until the end of October that the initial venture on the Brotherhood lines could be put into commission. This, Millais had decided, should be a painting based on the design he contributed to the proposed series of illustrations to "Isabella." A canvas 39 in. by 55 in. was an ambitious work for a lad only yet in his twentieth year : thirteen figures with elaborate individual costumes—with two dogs in addition. The picture now hangs in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, and it is worth making a journey to that city for the sole purpose of looking at it. It does not represent any incident in the story of "Isabella" either as related by Keats or Boccaccio. It is intended to represent the home life of the treacherous brothers and the unhappy Isabella and her lover, and so elaborate was the design, and so meticulous the detail, that Holman Hunt was fearful lest it would not be finished by the appointed time for the sending in of works for the next Academy exhibition. But his fears soon vanished, for he records, "a very few days' work on the picture, each part being completely finished at a sitting, was convincing that the artist's estimate of his own range of power in the character and in the extent of work he had to do was perfectly justified; so exact was the pitch of tone and colour of each fresh venture, and so unerring and rich in unexpected graces was the performance in all respects, that it was easy to see how much strength it would give to the status of our movement. Every visitor to the studio brought away a higher report than the last. Gabriel [Rossetti], who sat for one of the figures in the picture, became perfectly unbounded in his admiration, and William [W. M. Rossetti], who had also acted as a model, turning his head aside, raising his eyebrows, and extending his hands, intoned in separated

notes, 'It certainly is distinctly marvellous,' and so the reputation of the picture grew with its growth."

> Fair Isabel, poor simple Isabel!
> Lorenzo, a young palmer in Love's eye!
> They could not in the self-same mansion dwell
> Without some stir of heart, some malady;
> They could not sit at meals but feel how well
> It soothed each to be the other by.
>
> * * * *
>
> These brethren having found by many signs
> What love Lorenzo for their sister had,
> And how she loved him too, each unconfines
> His bitter thoughts to other, wellnigh mad
> That he, the servant of their trade designs,
> Should in their sister's love be blithe and glad,
> When 'twas their plan to coax her by degrees
> To some high noble and his olive trees.

Entitled "Isabella," and exhibited with this quotation from Keats's poem, the picture shows a room in a mediæval Italian house which opens on the right to a view of the garden. Four figures are seated on the left of the table and eight on the other side, with Isabella at the end—all of them in profile except the love-lorn Lorenzo, whose gaze is fixed on his adored one the while he hands her a plate on which is a blood orange cut in two. A serving man stands behind Isabella, and across the front of the picture is the extended leg of one of the brothers, kicking a greyhound which is nuzzling up to Isabella.

For each of the figures a relation or friend posed as model, and so faithfully did Millais adhere to the principles of the Brotherhood that each figure is a recorded portrait of the person who sat for it. Thus Isabella was painted from Mrs. Hodgkinson (wife of Millais's half-brother); William Rossetti sat for Lorenzo, as he himself has stated, "for the head, not for the long golden locks"; Gabriel Rossetti posed for the figure at the farther end on the right with head thrown back drinking from a long glass; the artist's father is represented in the figure wiping his lips with a napkin; the brother who is kicking the dog was Wright, a young architect.

The costumes were taken from a book which enthused the Brotherhood quite as much as the Campo Santo album—Bonnard's "Costume," with plates by Mercuri.

All the winter of 1848–9, then, Millais was working at the studio in Gower Street on this picture, which was to sound the trumpet-challenge to the convention-fettered art of his day : the call of youth for a return to the path of truth in art.

His principal companions in the Brotherhood, Holman Hunt and Rossetti, were each engaged on a work which also embodied their principles; the former's was "Rienzi," the latter's "The Girlhood of the Virgin." Each was to sign his work with their mystic letters "P.R.B."—each was to send it to the Royal Academy so that the assault might be combined and effective.

Even before the sending-in day came round, the reputation of Millais's picture had penetrated to artistic circles, and streams of privileged visitors flocked to his studio. Among these was Ford Madox Brown, who himself was working much on the same lines as the Brotherhood, but under the influence of Overbeck, the German painter. He was a friend of both Rossetti and Holman Hunt, but had no recognized connexion with the Pre-Raphaelite group. The sight of the picture effectually cancelled any previous slighting thought of Millais's work that he had entertained and he declaimed enthusiastically upon it to Holman Hunt.

"I assure you," he said, the latter records, "I was never so astounded in my whole life. Millais is no longer merely a very satisfactory fulfiller of the sanguine expectations of his prejudiced friends : he is a master of the most exalted proficiency. No one since Titian has ever painted a picture with such exquisite passages of handling and colour, and these charms, with a rare naïveté of character of his own, make the work astonishingly enchanting."

Hunt himself has described the work as "the most wonderful picture in the world for a youth of twenty."

In the spring of 1849 the two pioneers of the revolution, Hunt and Millais, sent their works in to the Academy for judgment, but had a great shock when they learned that Rossetti, instead of keeping to the agreed plan of campaign, had sent his "Girlhood of the Virgin" to a minor exhibition in St. George's Place, Hyde Park. By this means he secured a few extra days' work on the picture and its exhibition to the public a week before the opening of the Royal Academy, and thus the mystic letters of the reformers were revealed and their significance discussed before Millais's and Hunt's

pictures were known to the Press and public. Rossetti was hailed as the precursor of a new school, and the pre-eminence he thus secured in the Pre-Raphaelite movement has erroneously been attributed to him by many ever since.

Whilst awaiting the verdict of the Academy on his picture, Millais went down to the country—near Oxford—to paint studies of landscape. But he was back in town by the first Monday in May—on the morning of which day "outside" artists were allowed to put the finishing touches to their pictures in the exhibition before the public were admitted. The new Brotherhood had been lucky. Both Millais's and Hunt's works were accepted and hung as pendants just above the line* in the big gallery—probably because of their similarity of treatment—and Collinson was represented by a small picture of "Italian Image Boys."

The critics were evidently puzzled by these works. *The Athenæum* dealt with Millais and Hunt as the providers of something novel, and the writer of the notice went warily in his remarks :—

"There is so much ability and spirit in two works by men young in age and in fame, mixed up with so much that is obsolete and dead in practice, that some remark is demanded on a system whose tendency may be hurtful to our growing artists and our schools. The 'Isabella,' by Mr. J. E. Millais, imagined from a poem by Keats, and 'Rienzi,' by Mr. Hunt, are both by artists with whose names we have had before but slight acquaintance. Both are the recurrence to the expression of a time when Art was in a state of

* G. D. Leslie, R.A., in "The Inner Life of the Royal Academy," gives this explanation of "the line" at the Royal Academy, which is of interest to the general reader to whom the expression is somewhat indefinite :—

"People still speak of pictures being hung 'on the line,' but very few indeed, even amongst the present members themselves, know the origin of the term; the common belief that it implies a place on the walls on a level with a spectator's eye is more or less correct; but when the exhibitions were held in Somerset House and Trafalgar Square the term meant something far more definite. In those days people not only spoke of pictures being hung 'on the line,' but 'above the line' and 'below the line.' 'The line' was then a regular and permanent fixture; it was a horizontal line exactly eight feet from the floor, marked by a projecting ledge that left the surface of the wall below it two inches in advance of that which was above it.

"A picture was said to be hung 'on the line' when the top of its frame was level with this ledge. Hung thus, the picture, unless a very small one indeed, was exactly at the height to be viewed comfortably by a spectator standing in front of it. Sometimes a picture, if not very large, was not hung quite up to the line, but a foot or nine inches below it, in which case two or more quite small pictures, termed by the hangers 'little bricks,' were placed on the line to fill up the vacant gap. In the year 1856 Sir John Millais's picture, 'Autumn Leaves,' was thus hung below the line in the middle room in Trafalgar Square, and my first exhibited picture (a very small one, of a dead canary bird, exhibited under a feigned name) was one of the little bricks, 'on the line,' which filled up the space above it. It was in the year 1859 that a picture of mine had again the honour of serving as a 'little brick' to Sir John Millais; it was a small one entitled 'Reminiscence of the Ball' (a young lady looking at a programme of dances), which attracted the notice of Mr. Ruskin; it was placed immediately beneath Sir John's splendid work, 'The Vale of Rest.'

transition or progression rather than accomplishment. If the artist must have some particular model for his practice, the perfect rather than the imperfect would surely be a wise adoption. To attempt to engraft the genius of foreign nations upon our own is a most dangerous experiment. National art and taste are infallibly destroyed, and foreign excellence is rarely, if ever, attained.

"The justice of these remarks as applied to the imitative system in painting must be evident, and the inconsistency to which it leads is subversive of all national characteristics. The faults of the two pictures under consideration are the results of the partial views which have led their authors to the practice of a time when the knowledge of light and shade and of the means of imparting due relief by the systematic conduct of aerial perspective had not obtained. . . . In classing together these two works it should be understood that reference is made merely to the correspondence of views which has actuated both artists. In their several elaborations there is a marked difference; Mr. Millais has manifested the larger amount of resource. There is excellent action, painting, and character in the several heads of his picture (well distinguished in age and in sex) and in certain occasional passages of incident and of form, but the picture is injured by the utter want of nationality in the action of a prominent figure carried almost to the verge of caricature. This figure extends his unwieldy legs to the immediate front of the picture so as not merely to divide attention with, but to appropriate all attention from the love-sick Lorenzo and the fair Isabella who

> Could not sit at meals but felt how well
> It soothed each to be the other by.

In addition to this absurd piece of mannerism there is in the picture that inlaid look, that hard monotony of contour and absence of shadow which are due to the causes before stated."

From which it may be gathered that the critic was considerably worried, but the fact that he was constrained to write at such length upon the work of young artists "with whose names we have had before but slight acquaintance" proves that the pictures made a distinct impression upon him.

In *Fraser's Magazine of* July, 1849, appeared this comment: "Among the multitude of minor pictures at the Academy, nearly all of which, we are bound to say, exhibit more than an average degree of excellence, one stands out distinguished from the rest. This is the work of a young artist

## THE BLIND GIRL

*Painted* 1856. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy*, 1856.
*In the City Art Gallery, Birmingham.*

named Millais, whose name we do not remember to have seen before. The subject is taken from Keats's quaint, charming and pathetic poem, 'Isabella.' The whole family are seated at a table; Lorenzo is speaking with timid adoration to Isabella, the consciousness of dependency and of the contempt in which he is held by her brothers being stamped on his countenance. The figures of the brothers, especially of him who is nearest the front, are drawn and coloured with remarkable power. The attitude of this brother, as his leg is stretched out to kick Isabella's dog, is vigorous and original. The colour of the picture is very delicate and beautiful. Like Mr. Brown,* however, this young artist, although exhibiting unquestionable genius, is evidently enslaved by preference for a false style. There is too much mannerism in the picture; but the talent of the artist will, we doubt not, break through it."

One of the most biting criticisms damned the picture for its flatness, "as though it had been passed through a mangle."

Thus the critics—for the most part forced to admit the talent of the painter, but hesitant of downright praise for the work because of its disregard of current "style" in English art, because, in short, of its expressed contempt for the conventions then in force in painting.

Mr. M. H. Spielmann, in his little volume of the Memorial Exhibition of 1898, had no such considerations to hinder him when he wrote of the picture: "The ingenious composition, recalling in a measure one of Veronese's 'Feasts,' is supported by the excellence of colour, form, execution, and extraordinary finish, which attains its highest perfection, perhaps, in the head of Isabella. The drawing is as certain and as pure as Holbein's and far less hard than at first sight appears. There are passages of colour . . . worthy of Van Eyck."

The criticisms and the indifference of the public did not matter much, for the picture was sold! Mr. Hunt tells us that the purchasers were a syndicate of three Bond Street tailors who were making a venture as art dealers. They paid £150 for it, a price somewhat lower than that asked by the artist, but as a solatium they threw in a new suit of clothes! They were fearsome for the success of their deal, however, when they read the *critiques*, and parted with their picture to Mr. Windus, of Tottenham, in the same year for the amount they had paid for it.

* Ford Madox Brown.

"The Kick," as the picture came to be known—probably originally bestowed in derision—changed hands several times after that, but the vendors always made a handsome profit on the transaction. Among those who owned it was Thomas Woolner, R.A., the sculptor. It finally passed into the keeping of the trustees of the Liverpool Gallery, under the title of "Lorenzo and Isabella"—a treasured and invaluable possession.

# CHAPTER V

## Pre-Raphaelitism in Practice

*(Continued)*

THE summer and autumn of 1849 were busy months with Millais : he had a commission from Mr. Wyatt, a picture dealer of Oxford who had purchased the "Cymon and Iphigenia," to paint a portrait of himself and his grandchild. It was carried through wholly in accordance with the principles of the Brotherhood, and represents an old gentleman sitting in an arm-chair with his granddaughter standing beside him resting one elbow on his knee and leaning her head against him. Through a large bay window is shown a garden with a profusion of flowers.

Another commission from a second dealer was also under way and found fulfilment in "Ferdinand Lured by Ariel," on a canvas 23 in. by 19 in. Most of the intricate background of the woodland glade, in which Ferdinand stands listening to the baffling music of Ariel, was painted before he returned to town. His friend and fellow Pre-Raphaelite, F. G. Stephens, posed for Ferdinand. After a preliminary pencil sketch for the figure the painter worked direct upon the canvas, and Mr. Stephens relates that from "ten to nearly five the sitting continued without a stop, and with scarcely a word between the painter and his model. The clicking of the brushes when they were shifted in his palette, the sliding of his foot upon the easel, and an occasional sigh marked the hours, while strained to the utmost, Millais worked this extraordinary fine face. At last he said 'There, old fellow, it is done.' . . . For me, still leaning on a stick [Stephens was lame] and in the required posture I had become unable to move, rise upright, or stir a limb till, much as if I were a stiffened lay-figure, Millais lifted me up and carried me bodily to the dining-room, where some dinner and wine put me on my feet again. Later, the till then unpainted parts of the figure of Ferdinand were added from the model and the lay-figure."

The gauzy figures of Ariel and his attendant goblin bats and fairy sprites, a robin singing amongst the foliage and two lizards basking amongst fungus were all painted with the same scrupulous accuracy of detail.

The third picture of these autumn months of 1849 was to prove the most historic and to secure for the artist the greatest amount of opprobrious attention. This was the famous "Christ in the House of His Parents," now enshrined in the Tate Gallery. The subject was inspired by a sermon which Millais heard at Oxford whilst at work on Mr. Wyatt's portrait during the previous summer, on the text "And one shall say unto Him, 'What are these wounds in Thine Hands?'; then He shall answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends." (Zechariah xiii, 6.) Every detail was again conscientiously worked out, but stung by the charge of "flatness" in connexion with the "Isabella," the painter determined that in this case there should be no manner of cause for a similar complaint : light and shade and strongly defined projection should be demonstrated to the full. He related to Holman Hunt : "And this is no exaggeration, that when painting the body of the little St. John, as I finished it and turned my eyes from the body of the little boy who stood for me, back to my painting, so thoroughly in relief did it appear that on looking again at the model I could not at the moment tell which was which."

The details of the picture were discussed in family conclave, and the painter's father and mother sat by him as the picture was evolved. His mother would read to him, while his father relieved her at times by playing on his flute, both, in intervals, making suggestions or discussing with their son various points in the picture. Numerous first sketches survive to show the alterations that were made as the work progressed. The first intention, for instance, was to make the boy Christ kissing His mother, and many studies were made before the final attitude of these two principal figures was adopted—which was only shortly before the time for sending the picture in to the Academy. The little St. John carrying a bowl of water was also a last-hour addition.

The models for the figures were all obtained from relatives or friends; thus Mrs. Hodgkinson posed for the Virgin, Noel Humphreys (son of an architect) for Christ, Edwin Everett for St. John, and the artist's father for the head of Joseph. The figure of Joseph was painted from an actual carpenter—the owner of a workshop in Oxford Street—for, said Millais, "I was determined to choose a real carpenter, whose frame and muscles had been formed by the very exercise that had been the toil of the Virgin's husband." The background was painted from this shop, an actual

transcript of the scene. There Millais set up his easel for some days, painting every shaving with faithful similitude.

The flock of sheep seen through the doorway on the left of the picture —"the sheep without a shepherd"—was a source of anxiety, for live sheep are not to be studied anywhere in the vicinity of Gower Street, until in desperation the artist went to a neighbouring butcher's shop and bought two sheeps' heads with the wool on, and from these he painted his flock.

While Millais was working on this picture Holman Hunt was engaged on his "Christians escaping from Druid Persecution," destined for the same exhibition, and Rossetti was elaborating his "Annunciation." Through the winter each was wrestling with his own particular problem and making an earnest endeavour to go one better than his effort of the previous year. There were the usual monthly meetings of the Brotherhood, and at these was discussed the magazine, *The Germ*, that was to enunciate their principles and to reveal to the public exactly what they were striving for. The first number was in course of preparation when the Brotherhood was startled, as though by a bomb, by the publication in *The Illustrated London News* of a full explanation of the initials borne by their pictures of the previous year which had so worried critics and public alike. The writer of the paragraph held the whole movement of the reformers up to ridicule and derided both their principles and practice.

Consternation prevailed, for it was evident that one of their number had broken his pledge of secrecy and betrayed their camp to hostile forces. Inquiries soon revealed the fact that Rossetti was the culprit, and he confessed that on being pressed by an artist friend for an explanation of the sign manual of the Brotherhood he had given it to him on the undertaking that he would impart the information to no one else. The undertaking was treated lightly, and the friend must have gone post-haste to Angus Reach and given him this tit-bit of news for exploitation. The latter made the most of it, and his paragraph raised a storm against the Brotherhood : it would appear that Raphael was the most cherished idol of English art and that these would-be reformers were guilty of gross heresy against all the recognized canons of good art.

With their intentions and purposes thus fully known and exposed to a storm of ridicule, the three leaders of the band submitted their new works for judgment. Hunt and Millais sent theirs to the Academy, but Rossetti

again chose the comparative seclusion of the gallery in which his previous year's picture was shown. Millais submitted "Ferdinand Lured by Ariel," as well as the larger canvas of the Holy Family, which bore no title save the text already quoted. All four pictures had the provocative initials after the painters' signatures. The Academy accepted the three submitted to them, but Mulready afterwards said that he and Maclise had great difficulty in persuading the Council to do so.

The "Ferdinand" was hung in an obscure position very low down, but once more the two principal contributions of the Brotherhood were placed pendant to each other in the large gallery.

"The Carpenter's Shop," as the picture opprobriously became known, was sold before it went to the exhibition, the purchaser being a far-sighted dealer named Farrer, who paid the artist £150 for it; so that Millais had no anxiety on that score.

Holman Hunt relates how that before seven o'clock on the morning of the first Monday in May he went with Millais to the Academy to look at their pictures. "Between my admiration," he wrote, "of the exquisite painting of it all, the beauty of some of the figures, the spring-like naïveté of the scene, and the puzzling disregard of certain universally known facts, the clean-shaven face of Joseph to wit, I was dumb for some moments, when Millais suddenly muttered in undertone : 'It's the most beastly thing I ever saw. Come away ! ' 'My dear fellow,' I returned, 'the picture is truly marvellous. It is, indeed. But it is so many-sided that I really don't know how to express myself till I have taken it all in.' "

An indication of what they were to expect was given them at this moment when two "fellow students of vain-glorious mien rollicked into the room, and, seeing us standing there, walked between the pictures and ourselves, courting our regard as they looked at Millais's work, and then turned and laughed in our faces. Before they moved another step, Millais had advanced, and, putting his hand on the shoulder of the least imbecile, said to him : 'Do you know what you are doing ? Don't you see that if you were to live to the age of Methuselah, both of you, and you were to improve every day of your life more than you will in the whole course of it, you would never be able to achieve any work fit to compare with that picture ? '

" 'But we did not say anything,' they each pleaded with a pitiable affectation of innocence.

## AUTUMN LEAVES

***Painted*** 1856. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy*, 1856.

*In the City Art Gallery, Manchester.*

" 'No, but you did this, you laughed at my painting, and you did it defiantly in my face, so that you should not be surprised at my telling you that you were egregious fools.' "

This little episode was a straw to show the direction the wind was blowing. There were no congratulatory words from Academy members, as there had been the previous year, for the young artists, and when the Press notices appeared they indicated a very tornado of abuse and ridicule for the Brotherhood. *The Times* led off with : "Mr. Millais's principal picture is, to speak plainly, revolting. The attempt to associate the Holy Family with the meannest details of a carpenter's shop, with no conceivable omission of misery, of dirt, of even disease, all finished with the same loathsome minuteness, is disgusting; and with a surprising power of imitation may fall short, by dryness and conceit, of all dignity and truth."

*The Athenæum*, after decrying the aims of the Brotherhood generally, referred to the members in the following terms : "This school of English youths has, it may be granted, ambition, but not of that well-regulated order which, measuring the object to be attained by the resources possessed, qualifies itself for achievement. Their ambition is an unhealthy thirst which seeks notoriety by means of mere conceit. Abruptness and singular uncouthness are the counters with which they play for fame. Their trick is to defy the principles of beauty and the recognized axioms of taste. . . . Let us conjure these young gentlemen to believe that Raphael may be received as no mean authority for soundness of view and excellence of practice. They stand convicted of insincerity by the very excellence of some of their pictures. What a wilful misapplication of powers is that which affects to treat the human form in the primitive and artless manner of the Middle Ages, while minor accessories are elaborated to a refinement of imitation which belongs to the latest days of executive art. . . . In point of religious sentiment Rossetti stands the chief of this little band. Mr. Hunt stands next in his picture of 'A Converted British Family.' . . . Mr. Millais in his picture without a name, which represents a Holy Family in the interior of a carpenter's shop, has been most successful in giving the least dignified features of his presentment, and in giving to the higher forms characters and meanings, a circumstantial Art language from which we recoil with loathing and disgust. There are many to whom his work will seem a pictorial blasphemy. Great imitative talents have here been perverted to the use of an

eccentricity both lamentable and revolting. 'Ferdinand Lured by Ariel,' by the same hand, though better in the painting is yet more senseless in the conception, a scene built on the contrivance of the stage manager, but with very bad success."

A writer in *Blackwood* fulminated thus : "We can hardly imagine anything more ugly, graceless and unpleasant than Mr. Millais's picture of 'Christ in the Carpenter's Shop.' Such a collection of splay feet, puffed joints, and misshapen limbs was assuredly never before made within so small a compass. We have great difficulty in believing a report that this unpleasing and atrociously affected picture has found a purchaser at a high price. Another specimen from the same brush inspires rather laughter than disgust."

The worst blow, however, was administered by Charles Dickens, who, in a leading article in *Household Words*, under the title of "New Lamps for Old" wrote almost savagely of Millais's picture;

In the fifteenth century, a certain feeble lamp of art arose in the Italian town of Urbino. This poor light, Raphael Sanzio by name, better known to a few miserably mistaken wretches in these later days as Raphael (another burned at the same time, called Titian), was fed with a preposterous idea of beauty—with a ridiculous power of etherealising, and exalting to the very Heaven of Heavens, what was most sublime and lovely in the expression of the human face divine on Earth—with the truly contemptible conceit of finding in poor humanity the fallen likeness of the angels of God, and raising it up again to their pure spiritual condition. This very fantastic whim effected a low revolution in art, in this wise, that Beauty came to be regarded as one of its indispensable elements. In this very poor delusion, artists have continued until this present nineteenth century, when it was reserved for some bold aspirants to " put it down."

The Pre-Raphael Brotherhood, Ladies and Gentlemen, is the dread Tribunal which is to set this matter right. Walk up, walk up; and here, conspicuous on the wall of the Royal Academy of Art in England, in the eighty-second year of their annual exhibition, you shall see what this new Holy Brotherhood, this terrible Police that is to disperse all Post-Raphael offenders, has been " and done ! "

You come—in this Royal Academy Exhibition, which is familiar with the works of WILKIE, COLLINS, ETTY, EASTLAKE, MULREADY, LESLIE, MACLISE, TURNER, STANFIELD, LANDSEER, ROBERTS, DANBY, CRESWICK, LEE, WEBSTER, HERBERT, DYCE, COPE, and others who would have been renowned as great masters in any age or country—you come, in this place, to the contemplation of a Holy Family. You will have the goodness to discharge from your minds all Post-Raphael ideas, all religious aspirations, all elevating thoughts; all tender, awful, sorrowful, ennobling, sacred, graceful, or beautiful associations; and to prepare yourselves, as befits such a subject —Pre-Raphaelly considered—for the lowest depths of what is mean, odious, repulsive, and revolting.

You behold the interior of a carpenter's shop. In the foreground of that carpenter's shop is a hideous, wry-necked, blubbering red-headed boy, in a bed-gown; who appears to have received a poke in the hand, from the stick of another boy with

whom he has been playing in an adjacent gutter, and to be holding it up for the contemplation of a kneeling woman, so horrible in her ugliness, that (supposing it were possible for any human creature to exist for a moment with that dislocated throat) she would stand out from the rest of the company as a monster, in the vilest cabaret in France, or the lowest gin-shop in England. Two almost naked carpenters, master and journeyman, worthy companions of this agreeable female, are working at their trade; a boy, with some small flavour of humanity in him, is entering with a vessel of water; and nobody is paying any attention to a snuffy old woman who seems to have mistaken that shop for the tobacconist's next door, and to be hopelessly waiting at the counter to be served with half an ounce of her favourite mixture. Wherever it is possible to express ugliness of feature, limb, or attitude, you have it expressed. Such men as the carpenters might be undressed in any hospital where dirty drunkards, in a high state of varicose veins, are received. Their very toes have walked out of Saint Giles's.

This, in the nineteenth century, and in the eighty-second year of the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Art, is the Pre-Raphael representation to us, Ladies, and Gentlemen, of the most solemn passage which our minds can ever approach. This, in the nineteenth century, and in the eighty-second year of the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Art, is what Pre-Raphael Art can do to render reverence and homage to the faith in which we live and die! Consider this picture well. Consider the pleasure we should have in a similar Pre-Raphael rendering of a favourite horse, or dog, or cat; and, coming fresh from a pretty considerable turmoil about " desecration " in connexion with the National Post Office, let us extol this great achievement, and commend the National Academy!

In further considering this symbol of the great retrogressive principle, it is particularly gratifying to observe that such objects as the shavings which are strewn on the carpenter's floor are admirably painted; and that the Pre-Raphael Brother is indisputably accomplished in the manipulation of his art. It is gratifying to observe this, because the fact involves no low effort at notoriety; everybody knowing that it is by no means easier to call attention to a very indifferent pig with five legs, than to a symmetrical pig with four. Also, because it is good to know that the National Academy thoroughly feels and comprehends the high range and exalted purposes of Art; distinctly perceives that Art includes something more than the faithful portraiture of shavings, or the skilful colouring of drapery—imperatively requires, in short, that it shall be informed with mind and sentiment; will on no account reduce it to a narrow question of trade-juggling with a palette, palette-knife, and paint-box. It is likewise pleasing to reflect that the great educational establishment foresees the difficulty into which it would be led, by attaching greater weight to mere handicraft, than to any other consideration—even to considerations of common reverence or decency; which absurd principle, in the event of a skilful painter of the figure becoming a very little more perverted in his taste, than certain skilful painters are just now, might place Her Gracious Majesty in a very painful position, one of these fine Private View days.

Would it were in our power to congratulate our readers on the hopeful prospects of the great retrogressive principle, of which this thoughtful picture is the sign and emblem! Would that we could give our readers encouraging assurance of a healthy demand for Old Lamps in exchange for new ones, and a steady improvement in the Old Lamp Market! The perversity of mankind is such, and the untoward arrangements of Providence are such, that we cannot lay that flattering unction to their souls.

As a comment upon all this it may be recorded that Mr. Farrer, the purchaser of "The Carpenter's Shop," was in nowise affected by the tumult

and merely contented himself with pasting all the adverse notices on the back of the picture when it once more came into his possession after the closing of the exhibition.* Another dealer who had commissioned the "Ferdinand" for £100 declined to accept the picture, but it was sold to Mr. Richard Ellison for £150.

The virulence and gross unfairness of the campaign against the Brotherhood is its own condemnation. There was no attempt to recognize the aims of the young artists; only, apparently, the determination to crush these daring upstarts who tilted against the established art conventions of the time. The public, like sheep, followed the lead of the critics, and Holman Hunt tells how he used to go to the Academy and stand near the pictures in the hope of catching some stray word of praise. But he was never gratified; the invariable remark was: "Oh, it's one of those preposterous Pre-Raphaelite works."

Hunt felt the effects of the storm more severely in one way than Millais, for the sale of his picture was an absolute necessity to him if he was to continue in his chosen career; and, of course, this universal howl of condemnation kept off any prospective purchasers. Rossetti, who by betraying his trust was responsible for the preliminary outburst of ridicule, which undoubtedly intensified the vitriolic character of attack when the new output of the Brotherhood was exhibited, was so affected by the abuse—of which he had by far the smallest share—that he declared his intention of never sending to a public exhibition again. To which decision he doggedly adhered.

Millais's family were, naturally, greatly upset by this public condemnation of their idol. His mother particularly was indignant at the gross insults hurled at the work of her genius son, while the father threatened personal chastisement of the scurrilous writers, could he but find them; while they both combined in condemnation of Rossetti, whom they looked upon as an evil influence on their son and his art.

"I don't like the look of him," Hunt tells us, Mrs. Millais exclaimed. "He's a sly Italian, and his forestalling you deceitfully by sending his first picture to an exhibition, where it was seen with your joint insignia upon it, a week before the pictures by you and Jack would appear, was quite un-English and unpardonable, when you had taught him and treated him with great generosity."

The grieving father and mother questioned the wisdom of the Brother-

*The picture fetched £862 when it appeared in the sale-room in 1886.

hood, and waxed more indignant when they pointed out that "Jack" had to bear the brunt of the violent denunciations of its methods.

The two leaders of the despised movement, however, remained obdurate in their determination to "carry on" in the way they had chosen. Millais, who had made some delightful friends in Mr. and Mrs. Combe, of Oxford, went off to their neighbourhood to paint his next picture, "The Woodman's Daughter."

It was one of his Oxford friends who purchased Hunt's "Druid" picture and so enabled him to continue in his chosen profession. This was done at Millais's suggestion.

"The Carpenter's Shop" now hangs in the Tate Gallery, and in spite of some retouching by the artist in 1878 (during which, presumably, the original signature and the offending letters "P.R.B.," were painted out), it retains the freshness of colour which must have distinguished it when first exhibited. Looking at it in the light of the criticisms here quoted, one cannot help wondering at the mental astigmatism which prompted them; that the apparent beauty of the figures, and the reverence which pervades their treatment, should not have prevailed sufficiently to counteract the prejudice of the writers against the unconventionality of the painter.

It was, however, in 1850 that, despite the animadversion of the critics and the unpopularity of the Pre-Raphaelites, the Academy elected Millais an Associate of their body. It was a triumphant testimony to the merit of his work; but, alas, the magnitude of the triumph but emphasized the consequent depression when it was known that the election was annulled on account of the youthfulness of the painter ! Never before had the honour been conferred on a youth of twenty-one, but never before had a youth of that age accomplished work of sufficient merit to deserve it. It is to the credit of the Academy, therefore, that they acknowledged the merit without consideration of the age of its executant; it is matter for regret that the subsequent consideration of the artist's years outweighed the judgment awarded on his merits, even though there was a rule of the Academy concerning such a limitation of age. Rules are made to be broken—on emergency. This, however, was not accounted such, and the election was cancelled.

It was a heavy disappointment to Millais, as may well be imagined, but not a crushing one. He was too young and too enthusiastic in his work for that, and even though he did not secure the reward, he would, at least, continue to deserve it.

# CHAPTER VI

## Ruskin and Pre-Raphaelitism

THE winter of 1850–1 and the early spring following were occupied with three pictures intended for the 1851 Academy. They were "The Woodman's Daughter," "Mariana of the Moated Grange," and "The Return of the Dove to the Ark." In addition to these, Millais commenced a picture called "The Flood," which was never completed.

The three works were duly submitted to the Council, and all were accepted, but very badly hung. "Mariana of the Moated Grange" and "The Dove returning to the Ark" (known also as "The Daughters of Noah" and "The Wives of the Sons of Noah") were sold before they went to the Academy, the purchaser of the former being Mr. Farrer, the dealer who had bought "The Carpenter's Shop," and of the latter, Mr. Combe, of Oxford, who bequeathed it to the University Gallery of Oxford, where it now hangs.

Once again the Pre-Raphaelites were the subjects of violent abuse from the critics, and once again *The Times* led the attack :—

"We cannot censure at present as amply or as strongly as we desire to do, that strange disorder of the mind or the eyes which continues to rage with unabated absurdity among a class of juvenile artists who style themselves P.R.B., which, being interpreted, means *Pre-Raphaelite Brethren*. Their faith seems to consist of an absolute contempt for perspective and the known laws of light and shade, an aversion to beauty in every shape, and a singular devotion to the minute accidents of their subjects, including, or rather seeking out, every excess of sharpness and deformity. . . . The Council of the Academy, acting in a spirit of toleration and indulgence to young artists, have now allowed these extravagances to disgrace their walls for the last three years, and though we cannot prevent men who are capable of better things from wasting their talents on ugliness and conceit the public may fairly require that such offensive jests should not continue to be exposed as specimens of the waywardness of these artists who have relapsed

## THE VALE OF REST

"Where the weary find repose."

*Painted* 1858. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy*, 1859.
*In the National Gallery, British Art.*

into the infancy of their profession. In the North Room will be found Mr. Millais's picture of 'The Woodman's Daughter,' from some verses of Mr. Coventry Patmore, and as the same remarks will apply to the other pictures by the same artist, 'The Return of the Dove to the Ark', and to Tennyson's 'Mariana,' as well as to the similar works of Mr. Collins and Mr. Hunt, we shall venture to express our opinion on them all in this place. These young artists have unfortunately become notorious by addicting themselves to an antiquated style and an affected simplicity in painting which is to genuine Art what the mediæval ballads and designs in *Punch* are to Chaucer and Giotto. With the utmost readiness to humour even the caprices of art when they bear the stamp of originality and genius, we can extend no toleration to a mere servile imitation of the cramped style, false perspective, and crude colour of remote antiquity. We do not want to see what Fuseli termed drapery 'snapped instead of folded,' faces bloated into apoplexy or extenuated into skeletons, colour borrowed from the jars in a druggist's shop, and expression forced into caricature. It is said that the gentlemen have the power to do better things and we are referred, in proof of their handicraft, to the mistaken skill with which they have transferred to canvas the hay which lines the lofts in Noah's Ark, the brown leaves of the coppice where Sylvia strays, and the prim vegetables of a convent garden. But we must doubt the capacity of which we have seen so little proof, and if any such capacity did exist in them we fear that it has already been overlaid with mannerisms and conceit. To become great in Art it has been said that a painter must become as a little child, though not childish, but the authors of these offensive and absurd productions have continued to combine the puerility of infancy of their art with the uppishness and self-sufficiency of a different period of life."

Where *The Times* led, most of the others followed. There were, however, two notable exceptions this year—the *Daily News* and *The Spectator*—but the secession of the latter can be explained by the fact that William Rossetti had been engaged as art-critic to that paper, and he made a bold attempt to stem the tide of popular disfavour.

It was not only the Press that gibbeted the little band of reformers. Their work called forth violent expressions of contempt from writers of eminence like Lord Macaulay—who was glad that "Pre-Raphaelitism is spreading . . . glad, because it is by spreading that such affectations

perish"—and Charles Kingsley. The latter expressed his opinions of the Brotherhood through Claude Mellot in "Two Years Ago"—"I object on principle to these men's notions of what copying Nature means. . . . He had caricatured every wrinkle as his friend has in those horrible knuckles of Shem's wife"—and so on.

The effect of it all on Millais is expressed in a letter which he wrote to Mr. Combe on May 9, 1851 :—

"No doubt you have seen the violent abuse of my pictures in *The Times*, which I believe has sold itself to destroy us. That, however, is quite an absurd mistake of theirs, for, in spite of their denouncing my pictures as unworthy to hang on any walls, the famous critic, Mr. Ruskin, has written offering to purchase your picture of 'The Return of the Dove to the Ark.' I received his letter this morning, and have this evening made him aware of the previous sale. I have had more than one application for it, and you could, I have little doubt, sell it for as much again as I shall ask you."

Holman Hunt records that a professor at the Academy referred to the work of the Pre-Raphaelites in such scathing terms that some of the students protested. Hunt suffered in a more serious manner, for a publisher who had commissioned a series of drawings for a volume of Longfellow's poems returned the drawings with the comment that he had asked another artist to do the work; commissions for portraits were altogether lacking, for the people who could afford to have their portraits painted could not, of course, have them done by artists who were so universally condemned.

Then came a sudden diversion of this stream of hostility. *The Times* published two letters from John Ruskin, whose successive volumes on "Modern Painters" had captivated the attention of the thinking world for the previous two or three years. In the course of the first letter, after defending generally the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, he declared that passages of drapery in Hunt's picture and in Millais's "Mariana" and "Dove returning to the Ark" were incomparably above anything else of the kind in the exhibition, and that "there has been nothing in Art so earnest or so complete as these pictures since the days of Albert Dürer. This I assert generally and fearlessly." On the other hand, he "readily admitted" that "one cannot feel very sincere delight that Mr. Millais's 'Wives of the Sons of Noah' should have escaped the Deluge."

In the second letter he again pointed out the errors of the youthful

Brotherhood, "partly for the consideration of the painters themselves, partly that forgiveness of them may be asked from the public in consideration of high merits in other respects." The letter finished by wishing them "*all* heartily good speed, believing in sincerity, that if they temper the courage and energy which they have shown in the adoption of their system with patience and discretion in framing it, and if they do not suffer themselves to be driven by harsh or careless criticism into rejection of the ordinary means of obtaining influence over the minds of others, they may, as they gain experience, lay in our England the foundations of a school of art nobler than the world has seen for three hundred years."

Millais and Hunt sent a letter of thanks to Ruskin for his defence, with the result that Ruskin and his wife called at Gower Street, whence the letter had been addressed, and made the acquaintance of Millais. Thus began the friendship which later on was to have such momentous results for both men.

Of the three pictures of 1851, the "Mariana" was without doubt the chief, and most successful. "The Return of the Dove" was, as Ruskin pointed out, distinguished by the ugliness and uncouthness of the figures which the beautiful drawing and exquisite colour did not redeem.

"The Woodman's Daughter" bore as its explanatory sub-title the following stanzas from Coventry Patmore's poem, "The Tale of Poor Maud" :—

> She went merely to think she helped;
> And whilst he hack'd and saw'd,
> The rich squire's son, a young boy then,
> For whole days, as if awed,
> Stood by and gazed alternately
> At Gerald, and at Maud.
>
> He sometimes, in a sullen tone,
> Would offer fruits, and she
> Always received his gifts with an air
> So unreserved and free,
> That half-feigned distance soon became
> Familiarity.

The canvas, measuring $35\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $25\frac{1}{2}$ in., contains Millais's first landscape in a finished picture, an exquisite painting of a bit of woodland which was a literal interpretation of a scene at Botley, near Oxford, which the artist had discovered the previous year in Lord Abingdon's park. Every twig,

leaf, and blade of grass was painted with absolute fidelity to Nature, and as Millais's brother wrote of it : "Eye cannot follow the mysterious interlacing of all the wonderful green things that spring up all about, where every kind of wood-growth seems to be striving to get the upper hand and to reach the sunlight first, where every leaf and tendril stands out in bold relief."

For the uncouth little figure of the girl he borrowed frock, pinafore, and boots from the woman at whose cottage he stayed when painting the landscape, and once more the fact remains that the face of the child as first painted was "ugly." The little aristocrat is holding in his outstretched hand his offering to "poor Maud," some luscious strawberries. To secure the "models" for these the artist had to go to Covent Garden—in March—and his fidelity to Nature cost him 5s. 6d. for four strawberries. "A vast sum for me in those days," he said, "but necessary, and Charlie Collins and I ate them afterwards with a thankful heart."

The picture was bought by Mr. Hodgkinson, who afterwards bequeathed it as an heirloom to the painter. In 1886 Millais, as though he did not altogether appreciate the value of his early work, repainted the head of the girl and made other alterations in it which in a measure seriously detracted from its Pre-Raphaelite value. In his note upon it, when in the 1898 exhibition, Mr. Spielmann indeed wrote of the "disastrous consequences" of this later work. In the intervening thirty-five years Millais's methods had changed in a fundamental degree, and the repainting fails altogether to combine with his early surety of touch.

"Mariana in the Moated Grange" was inspired by Tennyson, and the stanza

> She only said, "My life is dreary—
> He cometh not ! " she said;
> She said, "I am aweary, aweary—
> I would that I were dead ! "

supplied the "text."

The sensuous figure of Mariana rising from her stool in front of her embroidery frame—which Ruskin curiously mis-described as an "idolatrous toilet table"—stretching herself backwards with hands on hips, clothed in a frock of luscious blue, is a triumph of technique, as, indeed, is everything in the picture, from the stained glass of the upper part of the windows to the mouse on the floor, behind Mariana. The window was painted from

one in the chapel in Merton College, Oxford, and the garden seen through the clear panes of the lower part of the window was transcribed to canvas from Mr. Combe's garden.

Mr. J. G. Millais records an interesting incident with reference to the mouse which figures in the picture. The painter was held up for a model to serve for the "wee tim'rous beastie ! " His father, "who had just come in, thought of scouring the country in search of one, but at that moment an obliging mouse ran across the floor and hid behind a portfolio. Quick as lightning, Millais gave the portfolio a kick, and on removing it the poor mouse was found quite dead in the best possible position for drawing it."

The picture was sold for £150 to Mr. Farrer, and afterwards passed into the possession of Windus, his fellow-dealer, who, with him, believed in Millais's triumph. It passed through several ownerships until acquired by Mr. Henry Makins, in whose family it still remains. It was on loan in the Tate Gallery in 1923, and it was of interest to note that between the signature and the date on the canvas is a gap just sufficient to take the letters "P.R.B." but all traces of the letters have been removed.

When the Academy closed, Holman Hunt sent his "Valentine Rescuing Sylvia from Proteus"—which was still unsold—to the Liverpool Exhibition, and to the gratification of the Brotherhood, and himself, he was awarded the £50 prize for the best picture in the exhibition, which affords convincing testimony to the reputed acumen of Lancashire men.

In August, 1851, Ruskin published his pamphlet on Pre-Raphaelitism in which he whole-heartedly upheld the methods and aims of the Brotherhood. In its preface, referring to the famous passage from the early volume of "Modern Painters," already quoted in a previous chapter, in which he advised young artists to go to Nature—"rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing"—he wrote : "Advice which, whether bad or good, involved infinite labour and humiliation in the following it; and was therefore, for the most part, rejected. It has, however, at last been carried out, to the very letter, by a group of men who, for their reward, have been assailed with the most scurrilous abuse which I ever recollect seeing issued from the public Press." To Millais, in the course of his essay, he ascribed "inventive power, with exquisite sense of colour."

# CHAPTER VII

## The Triumphs of 1852

IN the summer of 1851 were commenced those two pictures which marked the highest point of Millais's youthful work—"Ophelia" and "The Huguenot." He had made a preliminary sketch for a subject, "Ophelia in the Stream," and for this he needed the necessary setting. Holman Hunt was also wanting a landscape for his proposed new picture, "The Hireling Shepherd," and after discussing their needs they determined to go down to the neighbourhood of Kingston in the hope of finding a spot suitable to them both somewhere on the banks of the little Ewell River. Hunt at this time was almost in despair; his Academy picture was unsold, and in face of the murderous onslaught of the critics there was but little prospect of a purchaser coming along. His financial resources were exhausted, and he was again afraid that he would have to give up the attempt to live by his art. He told Millais of his straits, and the latter at once offered to share with him what money he had. Hunt knew that the demands on his young friend's earnings were great and that there was little margin for generosity of this kind. He forcefully declined the suggestion, but Millais would take no denial; he enlisted his father and mother on his side, and between them they persuaded Hunt to accept the proffered help. In his book, Hunt wrote: "I am as proud now to acknowledge my indebtedness as my friend was ever shy of having his generosity published; it is a noble act of friendship to record."

This matter straightened out, the friends set off on their quest. They trudged down from the source of the stream, and Hunt soon found a "bit" of scenery that would suit his requirements, but it was not until they had gone a very long way that Millais came upon a little reach of the stream that gave him what he required—the reed-fringed river with a background of tangled brier and scum of weed on the water. It is in the picture at the National Gallery, just as he saw it in the meadows at Cuddington.

## MY FIRST SERMON

*Painted* 1863. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy*, 1863.
*In the Guildhall Art Gallery, London.*

"Look, could anything be more perfect !" he exclaimed to Hunt, as the scene opened out to them. The decision was made forthwith, and the two young enthusiasts tramped back to Surbiton in search of lodgings and a meal before they returned home. These secured, they took their way to the railway station to find, on arrival, that the last train for London had gone. It did not matter to them—they were young and full of ardour to get to work upon their pictures. They walked home, arriving at two o'clock in the morning, tired out, but quite happy and contented.

In a few days they went back to Surbiton and began to work on their canvases. It was serious work, seriously treated. They were up by six o'clock and at their selected spots by eight o'clock, where they painted until evening, returning to their lodgings about seven o'clock; Hunt had to walk four miles and Millais two to their respective painting places. In a letter to Mr. Combe, Millais gives an interesting description of the trials and difficulties of the time : "I sit tailor-fashion under an umbrella throwing a shadow scarcely larger than a halfpenny for eleven hours, with a child's mug within reach to satisfy my thirst from the running stream beside me. I am threatened with a notice to appear before the magistrate for trespassing in a field and destroying the hay; likewise by the admission of a bull in the same field after the said hay be cut; I am also in danger of being blown by the wind into the water and becoming intimate with the feelings of Ophelia when that lady sank to a muddy death, together with her (less likely) total disappearance through the wrath of the flies. There are two swans who not a little add to my misery by persisting in watching me from the exact spot I wish to paint, occasionally destroying every water-weed within their reach."

All through the summer months of July and August the two painters worked, transferring meticulously to canvas what they saw in front of them, "rejecting nothing—selecting nothing."

Millais has in his setting for "Ophelia," the flowering rush, river daisy, forget-me-not, willow herb, meadowsweet, and the wonderful tangle of brier bush with its multitude of dog roses in bud and bloom.

Their lodgings were far from comfortable; their hunger had to be appeased with an unvarying diet of chops, until Millais writes that he has taken such "an aversion to sheep that I feel my very feet revolt at the proximity of woollen socks."

They were constrained to make sketches of their supply of butter, after breakfast was finished, because of the suspicion—well founded—that it was drawn upon for the needs of the family. After two months' experience of this sort, the friends moved to new lodgings at Worcester Park Farm, near Cheam, where they were joined by Charles Collins—second son of William Collins, R.A., who had become an adherent to Pre-Raphaelite principles.

Millais had completed his background for the "Ophelia" before Hunt had finished his "Hireling Shepherd" landscape, so he decided to begin what he called a "make-weight" picture as a second to the "Ophelia" for the next Academy. He had found a delightful old ivy-covered wall which he decided would make a background for a painting based on Tennyson's "Two lovers whispering by a garden wall." He started work on it forthwith. This developed ultimately into "The Huguenot." It was a development in the literal sense, for at the first it was to have been merely a picture of lovers—any lovers. The matter was, as usual, discussed with Holman Hunt, who expressed the opinion that it would be bad taste to expose the privacy of lovers. Then it was to be a picture of two lovers of the time of the Wars of the Roses—each of the opposite camp—a sort of English Romeo and Juliet. This was ruled out, and by a sudden inspiration, born of a recollection of Meyerbeer's opera of *The Huguenots*, the decision was made that the lovers should be a Catholic and a Protestant of the period of the massacre of Saint Bartholomew.

Mr. J. G. Millais records that his father made more trial sketches for this picture than for any other, with the exception of "The Black Brunswicker." At first there were to be priests with crucifix or candles endeavouring to convert the Huguenot, but it finally resolved into the composition as we know it—a Catholic girl trying to persuade her lover to accept the white bandage, the insignia that would secure his safety.

The stay at Worcester Park Farm lasted until the beginning of December, when the return to Gower Street was made with the two canvases. The wall and flowers—nasturtiums and Canterbury bells—for the "make-weight" picture were completed as was the setting for the figure of Ophelia. Hunt had brought back, in addition to the "Hireling Shepherd," his first conception of "The Light of the World," so that these months spent in the Surrey quietude can be reckoned as exceedingly fruitful.

The completion of the two works occupied Millais's attention all through the winter of 1851–2. For the figure of Ophelia he secured the services as model of Miss Siddal, who afterwards became Gabriel Rossetti's wife. Her discovery was due to W. H. Deverell, a close friend and disciple of the members of the Brotherhood. He saw her working in a milliner's shop and prevailed upon his mother to ask her to sit to him. She has been described by Mr. Arthur Hughes as "tall and slender, with red coppery hair and bright consumptive complexion." Deverell introduced her to the Brotherhood. Rossetti proclaimed her "a stunner" as a model, taught her to draw, and in 1860 married her; later she became his inspiration for that type which he made peculiarly his own and became indelibly fixed in all his future work. "Ophelia" represents her as she was at this time, for Millais painted her truly and faithfully to the life.

Miss Siddal, whilst posing for Ophelia, suffered considerably by the artist's insistence on the practice of the Pre-Raphaelite principle of unswerving truth to nature. For the proper and accurate set of the garments in the circumstances depicted the artist considered it necessary that the model should actually lie in the water. This she did—in a large bath in which the water was maintained at an even temperature by the aid of lamps placed beneath it. All went well until the picture was nearing completion, when, utterly absorbed in his work, the artist failed to notice that the lamps had gone out. He proceeded with his painting; the model became chilly and yet more chilly, but remained pluckily in her wretched position until, when the artist realized what had happened, she was numb with cold. The result was a severe chill and a threat by her father of a claim for damages, compromised by the artist paying the expenses of her illness.

"Ophelia" was sold as soon as it was finished to Mr. Farrer for three hundred guineas.

For the two figures in "The Huguenot" a professional model, a Miss Ryan, posed for the girl and Mr. Arthur (afterwards General) Lemprière, an old Jersey friend of the family, who was then living at Ewell, acted the part of the lover.

These two works, together with the "Cymon and Iphigenia" of 1847, which was partly repainted in accordance with Pre-Raphaelite methods, were sent to the Academy, and all were accepted and well hung.

"Ophelia" had the following quotation appended to the title:—

> There, on the pendant boughs her coronet weeds
> Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke,
> When down the weedy trophies, and herself,
> Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
> And, mermaid like, awhile they bore her up :
> Which time, she chanted snatches of old tunes,
> As one incapable of her own distress,
> Or like a creature native and indu'd
> Unto that element : but long it could not be,
> Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
> Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
> To muddy death.—(*Hamlet*, Act iv.)

and "The Huguenot" bore as title :—

A Huguenot, on St. Bartholomew's Day, refusing to shield himself from danger by wearing the Roman Catholic badge. See *The Protestant Reformation in France*, vol. ii, page 352 : "When the clock of the Palais de Justice shall sound upon the great bell at daybreak, then each good Catholic must bind a strip of white linen round his arm, and place a fair white cross in his cap."—*The order of the Duc de Guise*.

With "The Huguenot" Millais captured the public, despite the adverse criticisms which the Press still pronounced upon his work. The sentiment of this picture doubtless appealed to men and women alike, for it is ever true that "all the world loves a lover," but there is no question that the sentiment alone did not overcome the prejudice of the previous years against the Pre-Raphaelite work. The beauty of the woman's face, the exquisite painting, the brilliant technique of the setting, drew the crowds which congregated daily before it while it was on exhibition at the Academy.

William Rossetti, in *The Spectator*, again championed the Brotherhood and their work, but, to the surprise of many, *Punch* came out with a glowing tribute to Millais's "Huguenot." Written by Tom Taylor, it ran :—

There is another comfort for me. I have this year experienced a new sensation at the Exhibition of the Royal Academy. And I hasten to record my sense of the obligation to Mr. Millais. I offer my hand to that Pre-Raphaelite brother. I bow down to him, and kiss the edge of his palette. I have rapped him over the knuckles, in former years, with my pen. He is at liberty to return the compliment, this year, with his maul-stick.

Before two pictures of Mr. Millais I have spent the happiest hour that I have ever spent in the Royal Academy Exhibition. In those two pictures I find more loving observation of Nature, more mastery in the reproduction of her forms and colours, more insight into the sentiment of our greatest poet, a deeper feeling of human emotion, a happier choice of a point of interest, and a more truthful rendering of its appropriate expression, than in all the rest of those eight hundred squares of canvas put together.

I owe the painter this acknowledgment of a great and enduring pleasure, and I rejoice to make it—not for myself only, but for the thousands who have felt as I felt before these pictures. I may be heretical. I cannot help it. R.A.'s and A.R.A.'s, I admire you—I respect you—I appreciate your skill; and I would gladly purchase your works, if I could afford it. But for this year give me Mr. Millais. He has painted "Ophelia," singing, as she floats to her death, with wide open unconscious eyes, gazing up to heaven. The woven flowers have escaped from her relaxing fingers, and are borne idly with the long mosses of the stream, past the lush July vegetation of the river bank. The red-breast pipes on the willow spray, the wild roses give their sweetness to the summer air, the long purples peer from the crowding leaves, the forget-me-nots lift their blue eyes from the margin as she floats by, her brown hair drinking in the weight of water, and slowly dragging down the innocent face, with its insane eyes, till the water shall choke those sweet lips, now parted for her own death-dirge.

Talk as you like, McGilp, eminent painter, to your friend Mr. Squench, eminent critic, about the needless elaboration of those water-mosses, and the over making out of the rose-leaves, and the abominable finish of those river-side weeds matted with gossamer, which the field botanist may identify leaf by leaf. I tell you I am aware of none of these. I see only that face of poor drowning Ophelia. My eye goes to that, and rests on that, and sees nothing else, till—buffoon as I am, mocker, joker, scurril-knave, street jester, by trade and nature—the tears blind me, and I am fain to turn from the face of the mad girl to the natural loveliness that makes her dying beautiful.

If a painter were ever pardonable for painting after a poet—and such a poet—Mr. Millais may be forgiven for this picture of "Ophelia."

There is another work by the same hand—"A Huguenot, on St. Bartholomew's Day, refusing to shield himself from danger by wearing the Roman Catholic Badge."

The Roman Catholic lady and her Huguenot lover are standing under a garden wall. She has stolen out to meet him, and warn him of the danger. It has not been without doubt and hesitation that she has nerved herself to do so. The petals of the flower she has plucked to pieces in her tremor, are lying at his feet. Her passionate, earnest face, is turned up to his with the gaze of one that pleads for life, while her eager fingers try to fasten the white scarf round his arm. He will not have it, and with a gentle force impedes her tremulous effort. What do you read in his face? Love and pride and fearlessness, and a shade, perhaps, of incredulity. Some may find one of these sentiments, some another, some all of them together, some none of them. This is the rare quality of the picture. It has many meanings—admits of various interpretations—may be read in divers ways. The moment is rightly chosen. when nothing is decided—when two fates hang trembling in the balance, and the spectator finds himself assisting in a struggle, of which he may prophesy the issue as his sympathy with the love of woman or the strength of man happens to be strongest.

Of this picture, also, I boldly say, as I said of the other, there is not a whit too much of nicety, or precision, or finish in the details and accessories. Here, again, what I first see, in spite of myself, is the subtle human emotion of those two faces. All the rest I may find out when I have satisfied myself with that. But it is not without an effort that I can turn from those faces to the flowers that grow at the lovers' feet, or the creeper that mats the wall above their heads.

There is all that accuracy of eye and power of hand can do in these pictures, but there is still more of thought and brains. The man who painted these pictures thought them out. He had a meaning to express, and he has expressed it. He felt his subject and he makes me feel it. He cannot go on reproducing these pictures year after year, for the simple reason that the emotion and sentiment in each belongs to the particular

subject, and to no other. He may paint as elaborate river banks, as true brick wall, as brilliant plush, and as real a silk dress, but the heads are not stereotype, and once conceived and painted are conceived and painted for ever.

To all R.A.'s and A.R.A.'s, whether their subjects be rustic or heroic, fanciful or historical, of the past or of the present, I say, go and do likewise. Unless you can give me a pleasure of the same kind as these pictures give me you do nothing. Before them, I commune with the painter's thoughts; before your works I criticize coloured canvas.

I say it in no disparagement of you. The same thing is true of your elders and your betters; of many Italians and Flemings, whose pictures now fetch their weight in sovereigns, and are hung in high places.

In you and in them I recognize the triumph of skill, and the perfection of imitation. But here I see skill and imitative power subservient to thought, and embodying it with a power equal to the best of you.

"The Huguenot" was sold for £250, and in the autumn of the year gained the prize as the best picture at Liverpool. It was engraved by Thomas Barlow, and so well did the prints sell that the dealer actually paid Millais an additional £50; from this it may be assumed without much hesitation that the profits on the plate were entirely satisfactory. The picture afterwards passed into the possession of Mr. Miller, of Preston, in whose family it still remains.

The "Ophelia" passed through several ownerships—always at enhanced prices (at the Windus sale in 1862, for instance, £798 was paid for it) before it was finally acquired by Sir Henry Tate and by him presented to the nation.

The Tate collection is but lightly esteemed by the authorities; many of the pictures have been banished altogether, and others are so shuffled about that one never knows where to find them. At the moment of writing, "Ophelia" is at Trafalgar Square. The picture looks as fresh and sparkling as when first painted. The brilliance was secured, says Holman Hunt in his "Pre-Raphaelitism," by painting with the purest colours possible on a wet ground of white.

In 1873 Millais saw the picture on exhibition at South Kensington, and observed that, in spite of the care taken in the painting, the colour had deteriorated in the green of the water weeds and to a slight extent in the face of the figure. With the permission of the owner, he borrowed the picture and retouched these faults so delicately that the original brilliance was restored without any visible indication of the re-painting. The picture to-day is, without question, a triumphant record of this period of Millais's life, and, once again when looking at it, we are lost in wonder at the acrimony of most of the critics of its day who refused to see anything good in it.

## STELLA

*Painted* 1868. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy*, 1868.

*In the City Art Gallery, Manchester.*

## CHAPTER VIII

### Associate of the Royal Academy

WELL satisfied with the results of his Academy work, Millais proceeded with his next venture, "The Proscribed Royalist." Early in June he went down to Bromley, in Kent, and took lodgings at a delightful little inn near a spot exactly suited for the background: "The George," kept by a Mr. Vidler. The actual scene of the picture—Coney Hill, on Hayes Common—provided him with a stupendous oak, the bole of which afforded ample room for the Royalist in hiding. The tree is now known as "Millais's Oak," though the "little village, so very far from any railway station that I have no chance of getting to London in rainy weather," is now but an outlying tentacle of the London octopus.

All the summer the painter was absorbed in this work, with occasional visits to town, and with one interval of interest when he and his brother painted a new signboard for "The George" to replace the old one blown down in a gale. The landlord did not anticipate getting anything that would at all approach his own sign—"It will never be the same thing," was his comment on the offer. However, the work was done—Millais painting one side of the board and his brother, William, the other—and the new sign was duly hung. Hayes Common was a favourite picnic-ground, and the news of the sign that was painted by a great artist soon got abroad. "The George" became a centre of attraction—of course, to the delight of "mine host," who thought a great deal more of his sign thenceforward, which was carefully taken in at night or when bad weather threatened. It would be interesting to know its ultimate fate. Mr. William Baxter, an authority on "old" Bromley, informs me that the signboard hung in its place in his young days, and "depicted the usual combat with the dragon. This was very dark, but in certain lights could be plainly seen. It was taken down and placed inside, but is now lost. I have had correspondence with subsequent landlords, and Mr. Hambro, of Hayes Place, concerning it."

The satin dress of the girl in "The Proscribed Royalist" was taken down

to Bromley and painted in the open air, and it was not until November that the return to town was effected. The picture was completed in the studio in the ensuing winter months, the face and figure of the Puritan maiden being painted from the same model who had posed for the Catholic girl in "The Huguenot"—Miss Ryan; while for that of the Royalist concealed in the trunk of the oak Mr. Arthur Hughes "sat." He was one of a goodly company of young painters who were now professed followers of the Brotherhood, and, moreover, was one of the few who adhered to their principles practically throughout his career.

Before "The Proscribed Royalist" was completed a second picture intended for the next Academy exhibition was "on the stocks"—"The Order of Release." It is first referred to in Millais's correspondence in a letter to Mr. Combe, dated October 23, 1852, in which he stated that he was "going to the Tower of London, to look after a gateway or prison door." The picture was commissioned, through Thackeray, for Mr. Arden for £400, and, after "Ophelia," ranks as the artist's greatest achievement of the Pre-Raphaelite period. The picture is so well known that it is only necessary to state here that it is intended to represent a Highlander, who was out in the '45, being released from prison on an order secured by his wife, who has presumably tramped many weary miles, with her baby and the faithful dog, to present it in person. The painting of her expression of triumphant love and pride in her successful effort was perhaps the greatest emotional effect secured by the artist up to this point. The actual painting of the whole of the picture in every detail marks it as one of his most successful efforts. The weary relief of the Highlander, the sleeping child—he is *naturally* asleep—the joyous abandon of the dog, combine to render the picture noteworthy. In its attention to details it is a veritable triumph of Pre-Raphaelite fidelity, from the rust marks on the keys, the primroses which have fallen from the hand of the baby, to the actual "order of release" itself, the signature on which—copied from a genuine document issued by Sir Hildegrave Turner, Governor of St. Elizabeth Castle, in Jersey—was recognized by the son of the writer when he saw the picture in the exhibition.

In a letter to Mr. Combe (given in the "Life and Letters") Millais wrote a graphic description of his trials when working from his child model while painting this picture.

"I have a headache," he wrote, "and feel as tired as if I had walked twenty miles, from the anxiety I have undergone this last fortnight. All the morning I have been drawing a dog, which in unquietness is only to be surpassed by a child. Both of these animals I am trying to paint daily, and certainly nothing can exceed the trial of patience they occasion. The child screams upon entering the room, and when forcibly held in its mother's arms struggles with such successful obstinacy that I cannot begin my work until exhaustion comes on, which generally appears when daylight disappears. A moment's quiet is out of the question. The only opportunity I have had was one evening when it fell asleep just in the position I desired. . . . When I suggest corporal punishment in times of extreme passion the mother, after reminding me that I am not a father, breaks out into such reproofs as these : 'Poor dear ! Was he bothered to sit to the gentleman? Precious darling ! Is he to be tormented? No, no, my own one; no, my poppy, my flower, cherub,' etc., etc.—dying away into kisses, when he (the baby) is placed on his legs to run about my room and displace everything. . . . This infant I could almost murder; but the dog I feel for, because he is not expected to understand. I do more from this creature in a day than from the other in a week."

For the figure of the Highlander, a well-known professional model, Westall (an ex-dragoon) posed, and the gladsome wife is an actual portrait of Lady Millais as she was at that time, two years before her marriage to the painter, save that the hair is painted black instead of auburn, in contrast to the flaxen hair of the child.

Although the critics, with the exception of Tom Taylor, who now wrote for *The Times*, again fell foul of Millais over these works, the public acclaimed "The Order of Release" as the picture of the year and, for the first time in the history of the Academy, a policeman had to be on duty in front of the picture to keep the crowds moving.

It was the favourite work of his hand to the artist, and when in his last illness, hearing that it was likely to come into the market, he gave a broad hint to Sir Henry Tate that he would like it to become the property of the nation. Sir Henry, whose generous scheme with regard to his pictures was already determined upon, made up his mind to secure it for inclusion in his collection. When the Renton sale duly came on he *did* secure it for the price of 5,000 guineas, nearly double the price Mr. Renton had paid for it.

There is no question that the picture was mainly instrumental in influencing Millais's election as an associate in the November of the year in which it was exhibited. The abortive election of 1850 has already been referred to : the artist had now passed his twenty-fourth birthday, and was therefore within the range of the Academy's limitation of age for associates. On the night of the election, Millais and his brother went down to the Academy to hear the result, which was communicated to them by Charles Landseer in the words, "Well, Millais, you are in this time in *earnest*"—a joke which was not evident until they heard that he had been elected as "John *Ernest* Millais."

The year 1853, then, was a triumphant one for the young artist. He had painted two successful pictures and sold them both at good prices; indeed, the £400 paid for "The Order of Release" was a *very* good price to receive in those days. He was an Associate of the Royal Academy, ranking with Landseer as the youngest men, with the exception of Lawrence (who was only twenty-two), to be elected. It was a climax to his triumphal march of youth. His steadfast adherence to his gospel of work had brought its reward : he had attained the first stage of a successful career at an age when many men are but merely making a start for the goal.

The "Brotherhood"—that outcome of boyish enthusiasm—was now but a name. Hunt went away at the end of this year for a long tour in the Holy Land in quest of "local colour" for his religious pictures. Rossetti chose to assume that now that Millais had entered the fold "the whole Round Table is dissolved"—an assumption that was entirely unjustified, for Millais had in nowise deviated from the Brotherhood principles, and had no intention, then, of so doing. He had conquered the Academy and gained the sympathetic attention of the public. Ruskin was battling against the prejudice of the critics in lectures and writings, and Millais was still convinced that Pre-Raphaelitism and all for which it stood was to be the controlling factor of his work.

Pre-Raphaelitism was justified; it had now many "followers"; it was influencing the work not only of young men but of many older ones, who recognized that, within limits, it was good. True, of the leaders, Millais alone remained to keep the flag flying. Hunt was in the East, and Rossetti was at Oxford, where he was the idol of the intellectuals of the University. The literary section of the Brotherhood was carrying on a ceaseless campaign against the Academy, which doubtless increased the

feeling of the older artists against the Pre-Raphaelites. On Millais's election as an associate, Miss Christina Rossetti indulged in this sonnet :—

> The P.R.B. is in its decadence;
> For Woolner in Australia cooks his chops,
> And Hunt is yearning for the land of Cheops,
> D. G. Rossetti shuns the vulgar optic;
> While William M. Rossetti merely lops
> His B's in English disesteemed as Coptic.
> Calm Stephens in the twilight smokes his pipe,
> But long the dawning of his public day :
> And he at last, the champion, Great Millais,
> Attaining Academic opulence
> Winds up his signature with A.R.A.
> So rivers merge in the perpetual sea;
> So luscious fruit must fall when over-ripe
> And so the consummated P.R.B.

To Millais himself the election was merely a spur to greater effort in the way he had chosen. He had done well, but his determination was to do better.

It was in the summer of 1853 that he made his first acquaintance with Scotland. Accompanied by his brother, they went as far as they could by rail—Morpeth, in Northumberland—(how long ago that seems !), where they found Mr. and Mrs. Ruskin, and with them went by private coach across the Border. It was during this holiday that Millais made the study for the wonderful portrait of Ruskin standing by the waterfall of Glenfinlas—which was painted the following year and purchased by Sir Henry (then Dr.) Acland.

The year after his election was a blank so far as the exhibition was concerned—the new associate was unrepresented. But it was not an idle year by any means, for all the spring and summer were devoted to the painting of "The Blind Girl" and "L'Enfant du Régiment" (afterwards known as "The Random Shot"). It was in the search for the setting for the latter subject that he was impelled to go to Winchelsea, where, in the Priory Church of Icklesham, he found precisely the scene that met his requirements.

The picture represents a sleeping child lying on an alabaster tomb on which is the figure of a recumbent knight. It is in the time of the French Revolution; the child is partly covered by a soldier's tunic, and its right arm is bandaged. In the background a party of troops are firing through the window. The tomb is that of Gervaise Allard, a beautiful relic of

mediæval work. Most of the landscape for "The Blind Girl" was also painted in and around Winchelsea, but it was completed in Scotland, together with the figures.

These two pictures, however, were not exhibited until 1856, and will be dealt with fully in due course.

In 1855 Millais made his first exhibit as an associate with "The Rescue," which was painted on an impulse given by the sight of a fire early one morning when returning from a ball. Millais was so impressed with the work done by the firemen that he remarked to his brother: "Soldiers and sailors have been praised on canvas a thousand times. My next picture shall be of the fireman." The decision was put into execution immediately with the usual enthusiasm of the painter for his subject. It was a close thing to get the picture finished by sending-in day, and the final touches were only given as the van drove up to the door at midnight. There were many difficulties involved in its production. The model who posed for the fireman was a professional named Baker, who had to stand holding three children in his arms in the attitudes decided upon in the original studies—a feat of endurance which could not be sustained for a very long period at a time. The glare of the fire was secured by placing a carefully selected sheet of coloured glass of the right hue between the window and the models.

When Millais went down on the members' Varnishing Day he found his picture had been ruthlessly skied. His indignation was great, and he told the Hanging Committee in no measured terms what he thought of them; he ended his protest by threatening to resign unless the picture were given a better position. According to Thomas Seddon it was a deliberate affront—part of a campaign by the Council against the Pre-Raphaelite group. He wrote to Bell Scott to say "the hangers are of the old school and they have kicked out everything tainted with Pre-Raphaelitism. My 'Pyramids' and a head in chalk of Hunt's, and all our friends are stuck out of sight or rejected." Millais's picture was put where it could not be seen.

The upshot was that the picture was given a more worthy position—more worthy, that is, of its merits and of the artist's status of A.R.A. The critics as a whole were favourable to it, and Ruskin declared it "the only great picture of the year." At the Liverpool exhibition it only failed to secure the prize as the best picture by one vote.

Thackeray, who had spent part of the time with Millais at Winchelsea,

## CHILL OCTOBER

*Painted* 1870. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy*, 1871.
*In the possession of Lord Armstrong.*

where he wrote a good deal of "Denis Duval," recommended the picture to Mr. Arden, of Rickmansworth Park, and he accordingly bought it. At the sale of his collection in 1879 it was purchased by Agnews for £1312, and in June, 1923, the picture was acquired for £1470, for the National Gallery at Melbourne.

In 1855 another name that was to become historic figured in the Academy catalogue—that of Frederic Leighton, with his picture of "Cimabue's Madonna taken in Triumph through Florence." Millais himself told the story in after years of his first acquaintance with the name. It was from Thackeray that he had heard it on the latter's return from Italy. "Millais, my boy," he said, "you must look to your laurels. I have met a versatile young dog in Rome, about your own age, who some day will run you close for the Presidentship of the Academy." The prophecy, though altogether very unlikely of fulfilment when it was spoken, was, as we now know, an accurate forecast of what happened many years afterwards.

In the summer of 1855 Millais was married. The circumstances of the marriage have been narrated very fully by Holman Hunt in his "Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," and there is no need here to go into details of the matter. Suffice it to say that after six years as the wife of Ruskin, the lady who was also his cousin, returned to her father's home at Perth and secured a decree annulling the marriage on grounds, as Mr. J. G. Millais says in his "Life and Letters" of his father, "sanctioned equally by Church and State." Mrs. Ruskin resumed her maiden name of Euphemia Chalmers Gray, and in that name was married by Millais, a year almost to the day after she had left Ruskin's house. In that year they did not see each other at all. Millais had stayed with the Ruskins the previous summer and autumn, and had remonstrated with Ruskin on his indifference to his wife—a dangerous thing to do—but for a time, at any rate, there was no open breach between the two men. So far as Millais was concerned, his marriage was an ideal one and the partnership, which endured for forty-one years, brought him nothing but happiness. It meant the break-up of the family circle in London, for the newly-wedded pair made their first home at Annat Lodge, an old house near Bowerswell, Mrs. Millais's home in Perth.

It was in the winter of 1855 that Millais did the wonderful series of twelve black and white drawings for Moxon's "Tennyson," and a second set of eighteen for Macmillan.

# CHAPTER IX

## The Passing of Pre-Raphaelitism

THE Academy of 1856 was a memorable one in Millais's history, for he was there represented by five pictures—"L'Enfant du Régiment," "Peace Concluded" ("The Return from the Crimea"), "Portrait of a Gentleman" (a humorous title, for it represented a little boy looking at a picture-book), "The Blind Girl," and "Autumn Leaves." The two last-mentioned take rank amongst the works by which his name still lives.

"The Blind Girl," as we have remarked, was commenced in 1854 at Winchelsea, but only a part of the landscape was done there; for the main, the picture was painted at Perth in the following year. It is a triumph of Pre-Raphaelite principles and of the artist's exposition thereof. There is detail in full of everything, from the moisture-spangled grass blades to the distant village on the hill-crest, from the tortoiseshell butterfly on the blind girl's shawl to the double rainbow, and yet there is nothing hard or harsh in any part of the picture. The details are absorbed in the whole without any staring insistence to detract from the complete and satisfying beauty of the canvas. This is where Millais secured his triumph at this period and where Holman Hunt and so many of the "followers" of Pre-Raphaelitism went astray. It is only necessary to refer to the former's "Awakening Conscience" and to R. B. Martineau's "Last Day in the Old Home" at the Tate Gallery to illustrate the point.

"Autumn Leaves," too, was painted at Millais's new home at Perth. The artist's sisters-in-law posed for the two taller girls, and the others were the gardener's children.

The pictures were well hung in the exhibition and all were sold, but the Press—again led by *The Times*—was as vituperative as of old. "The critics are rather worse than ever," wrote Millais to his wife. "I don't, indeed, expect any better treatment from the Press in my lifetime, as the critics are too intimately mixed up with the profession. . . . *The Times* is more

wickedly against me this year than ever. . . . Beyond a sudden surprise on seeing the criticism, I was not much disturbed, as it has been my fate from the first, and probably will be to the last, to meet with ungenerous treatment from newspapers. A very young man doesn't get nine hundred guineas for his pictures without some attempt at detraction. . . . There is some underhand trickery which must sooner or later come to light. I am not at all sure that it does not spring from the Academy itself; indeed, there is every reason to suppose it does."

*The Athenæum's* criticism was, as a matter of fact, more vitriolic than that of *The Times*, and the following passages will show the style of the critic of the 'fifties :—

"Mr. Millais must have been staying at the village which Goldsmith immortalizes as 'Sweet *Auburn*, loveliest village of the *plain*,' for plain people with red hair seem this year his idiosyncracy. About all his pictures there is a red-haired inflammatory atmosphere very eccentric and unpleasing. Through tone to texture, his drawing is now frequently coarse and careless, his colour treacly and harsh, and his shadows are heavy and disturbed. . . . His best and most original personation, his smallest and least cared for, is entitled 'The Child of the Regiment' . . . very exquisite is this little gleam of thought. Would that we could say as much of the disagreeable pretentious 'Peace Concluded' ! The thought in this is commonplace. 'The Blind Girl' is another study of red hair, and really coming after the rest rather excites our gall. . . . We must protest, however, against sweetmeat rainbows of lollipop colours, raw green fields, and lace-up boots ostentatiously large."

*The Art Journal*, too, attacked the colour of "The Blind Girl" as being "most unnatural"—because, presumably, it stood out vividly against that of neighbouring pictures which were not attuned, as it was, to the actual colour of objects under direct sunlight in the open air.

There was one mistake in the picture. Millais painted the second rainbow exactly as the first, overlooking the fact that a "double" rainbow is merely the reflection of the original bow and that the colours ought, therefore, to have been reversed and toned down. This correction was made some years later.

Millais's diatribe against the Academy in connexion with *The Times* criticism cannot be justified in view of his own contentment with the positions accorded to his pictures by the Hanging Committee, and his suggestion

that there was some arrangement between the Academy and "the Thunderer" was prompted doubtless by pique at the condemnatory tone of the review of his work.

If the Press was adverse, Millais had at least the generous outspokenness of his friends to console him. Ford Madox Brown declared "Autumn Leaves" to be "the finest in painting and colour that he has yet done," and "The Blind Girl" he called "a religious picture and a glorious one." Rossetti described it as "one of the most touching and perfect things I know."

Ruskin once more championed Millais, and made up a great deal for the chorus of adverseness from the critics of lesser importance. "Autumn Leaves" he referred to as "by much the most poetical work the painter has yet conceived and also, as far as I know, the first instance of a perfectly painted twilight . . . it will rank in the future among the world's masterpieces."

He also praised equally highly the "Peace Concluded," and, indeed, placed it on the same level as "Autumn Leaves."

"Titian himself could hardly lead him now. The picture is as brilliant in invention as consummate in executive power."

This is rather extraordinary in view of its universal condemnation by Millais's intimate friends. Rossetti, for instance, said it was "a very stupid affair to suit the day," and Ford Madox Brown, that the "colour was bad, but some expressions beautiful, and lovely parts." When it appeared in the Memorial Exhibition at the Academy it seemed utterly commonplace and wholly unworthy of the hand that had painted "Autumn Leaves" and "The Blind Girl." Mr. J. G. Millais acknowledges that it is not a good example of his father's art. It was doubtless an effort to secure popularity with a "topical" subject. It was intended primarily as a pictorial satire upon an open scandal of the day, when officers could secure leave from the horrors of the Crimea to give attention to "urgent private affairs," while for the rank and file all leave was strictly forbidden. The picture then represented a young officer indulging in all the luxury of home life, caressed by his wife —indifferent to the claims of duty. Before the painting was finished peace was announced, and the subject was out of date—the satire had lost its point. Rather than sacrifice it altogether, Millais put a sling on the man's arm and painted in a copy of *The Times* containing the formal announcement of peace; thus the slacker was transformed into a wounded hero, rejoicing that the days of trial were ended.

The picture, however, secured a certain meritricious popularity at the time, and was bought by Mr. Miller, of Preston, for 900 guineas.

"The Blind Girl" was also purchased by Mr. Miller for £315, and at his sale in 1855 it was acquired by Mr. Graham. In 1886 it changed hands again for £871. In 1857 the picture was shown at the Liverpool Academy and awarded the prize as the best picture in the exhibition. The award raised a great outcry, not only locally but in the Press generally. *The Athenæum* denounced the Academy bitterly for its recognition of "The Pre-Raphaelite heresy," and a battle royal—on paper—ensued, in which Ruskin again led the defence against the assault of the conventionalists. "The Blind Girl" is secured to the public by its presentation to the Birmingham City Art Gallery by Mr. Alderman Kenrick in 1892. "Autumn Leaves" was bought by Mr. Eden, who, when he had got it home, did not like it, and tried to persuade the painter to take it back. Millais, however, advised him to "sit opposite to it when at dinner for some months and he would learn to like it." The test was made, but the dislike became more violent, and when a friend, Mr. Leathart, said one day, "Eden, I will give you any three of my pictures for 'Autumn Leaves,'" the offer was seized upon and the strange transfer effected. The picture is now in the Manchester City Art Gallery.

The work for 1856 was represented by a small picture entitled "Pot Pourri," but in the autumn and winter Millais began two pictures for the Academy of 1857—the famous "Sir Isumbras at the Ford" and "The Escape of a Heretic."

The former picture gave him no end of trouble after the landscape was painted from a scene near his home—the Bridge of Earn, with the Ochill Hills beyond. The aged knight in his gilded armour was mounted on a horse that was obviously too light for such a burden. It was repainted, and then it was too large; a fact, of course, which was at once seized upon by the critics when they saw it in the Academy. It was afterwards repainted again when it came back from the exhibition. One day, when the new horse was nearly finished, a sudden gust of wind blew the canvas over and the head of the knight was pierced by the arm of an iron chair. Millais was inclined to end the picture there and then, but he was persuaded to have it repaired, and this was done so skilfully that the damage was invisible. When it was shown many years afterwards (1886) at the Grosvenor Gallery

further alterations were made and the trappings added to the horse at the request of the owner.

"The Escape of a Heretic, 1559," was painted avowedly as a pendant to "The Huguenot," and represents a young gallant, who has disguised himself as a monk, rescuing his mistress from the prison of the Inquisition. It was a melodramatic work entirely lacking the simple sentiment of the picture to which it was intended to serve as companion.

These two works, then, with a little canvas entitled "News from Home," were sent to the Academy, and once again the storm raged round Millais, and, bitterest blow of all—was directed by his one-time friend and champion, John Ruskin.

The knight was exhibited under the title of "A Dream of the Past—Sir Isumbras at the Ford," with the following verse, apparently taken from an old romance, but which, in reality, was especially written for Millais by Tom Taylor :—

The goode hors that the knyghte bestrode,
I trow his backe it was full brode,
And wighte and warie still he yode,
  Noght reckinge of rivere:
He was so mickle and so stronge,
And thereto so wonderlich longe
  In londe was none his peer.
N'as hors but by him seemed smalle,
The knyghte him cleped Launcival;
But lords at borde and groomes in stalle
  Cleped him Graund Destrere.
And als he wente by a woode schawe,
Thare mette he with a lytille knave
  Came rynnande him agayne—
"Grammèrcy, faire Sir Ysumbras,
Have pitie on us in this case,
And lifte us uppe for Marie's grace!"
  N'as never childe so fayne.
Theretoe of a mayden he was ware,
That over floude ne mighte not fare,
Sir Ysumbras stoopede him thare,
  And uppe ahent hem twayne."

*Metrical Romance of Sir Ysumbras.*

The picture roused all Ruskin's power of denunciation and the verse his contemptuous scorn. "It is not merely Fall," he wrote, "it is Catastrophe;

# THE KNIGHT ERRANT

" The Order of Knights Errant was instituted to protect widows and orphans, and to succour maidens in distress."

*Painted* 1870. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy*, 1870.
*In the National Gallery British Art.*

not merely a loss of power, but a reverse of principle." The verses were "a clever mystification by one of the artist's friends, written chiefly with the view of guarding the awkward horse against criticism. . . . I am not sure whether the bitterest enemies of Pre-Raphaelitism have yet accused it of expecting to cover up its errors by describing them in bad English."

F. G. Stephens, in his notes on the Grosvenor Gallery exhibition of Millais's work in 1886, gave a vivid description of the reception of the picture. He wrote: "The appearance of Sir Isumbras produced a tremendous sensation. Pictures, skits, jokes, deliberate analyses and criticisms —most of them applied to purposes and technical aims not within the artist's intention when the picture was in hand—crowded the columns of the comic as of the more serious journals, utter ruin and destruction were prophesied of the artist who, somewhat rashly, had followed a technical purpose, but whose success in that respect cannot now be questioned. Among the most edifying of the comments published on 'Sir Isumbras' was a large print entitled 'A Nightmare' and believed to be the work of Mr. F. Sandys, a distinguished brother artist, who probably was not without grievances of his own against critics."

This print, indeed, has become almost as classic as the picture itself. It showed Millais mounted on a donkey who bears on his flank the letters "J.R., Oxon.", and who is braying loudly as he crosses the ford. Instead of a sword and helmet, there are slung from the "knight's" belt a maul-stick, a pot of paint, and a bunch of peacock's feathers. In place of the "maiden" on his saddle-bow sits D. G. Rossetti, and hanging on to him behind is Holman Hunt. On the distant bank, instead of the two nuns, are little figures of Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Titian. Tom Taylor, with charming impartiality, also wrote a skit on his own verse to accompany the caricature.

The result of it all was that at the close of the exhibition the picture remained unsold, for the feeling against the Pre-Raphaelites was intensified beyond measure. Charles Reade, the author of "It's Never Too Late to Mend," however, bought the picture afterwards for £300. It subsequently passed into the possession of Mr. Graham, and at the sale of his collection in 1887 it was bought by Mr. Benson for £1365.

As a comment on the contemporary criticism it is interesting to see what was thought of the picture thirty years afterwards. Mr. M. H. Spielmann, in his notes on the Memorial Exhibition of 1898, wrote: "The picture

remains one of the most splendid, imaginative and impressive works that Millais ever painted, and yet with a fine appreciation of 'values.' It is, I think, the most decorative of them all with a more formal sense of design than any other. . . . There can be no question that the landscape background in the picture excels that of every other in the gallery, with the possible exception of that much less ambitious one in 'Autumn Leaves.'"

So far as Millais was concerned, these pictures marked the beginning of the end of the Brotherhood. They were the last to be painted by him strictly in accordance with its tenets. He did not entirely abandon the methods of technique for some little time, but his next pictures distinctly marked the breaking away from the traditions of the School. He himself described this breaking away as the emergence from his "artistic puberty." Holman Hunt in a kindly way excused his friend's divergence on the grounds that Millais was worn out by the continued adverse attacks of the critics and the indifference of the authorities to his work. "In no other age," he said, "would such an artist have been left without some national opportunity of exercising his genius. There were indeed painters and sculptors being employed to decorate the Palace of Westminster, but no public minister amidst the clamour that had been raised against our 'heresy' would, however much he might have been instigated by his own taste, have had the courage to employ any of us on public work, and Millais was never asked by any Church dignitaries to paint for them. While his works were still vehemently abused by the Press, those of artists of mediocrity were lauded to the skies, and certain of these painters were favoured by Parliamentary Commissioners of Fine Art." "Millais in this position," Hunt goes on, "found himself driven to despair and want of faith in the possibility of teaching his countrymen the value of poetic art. 'I have striven hard,' he said to me, 'in the hope that in time people would understand me and estimate my best productions at their true worth, but they [the public and private patrons] go like a flock of sheep after any silly bell-wether who clinks before them. I have up to now generally painted in the hope of converting them to something better, but I see they won't be taught, and as I *must* live, they shall have what they want instead of what I know must be good for them. A physician sugars his pill, and I must do the same.'"

# CHAPTER X

## New Methods

THE year 1858 was a blank so far as the exhibition was concerned. Millais was engaged upon the two pictures which were to mark his divergence from the Pre-Raphaelite methods, "Apple Blossom" ("Spring") and "The Vale of Rest," which—with "The Love of James I of Scotland"—formed his contributions to the Academy of 1859. "Apple Blossom" had been begun as far back as 1856, but the whole conception had been altered. Its original design was for one figure of a girl under an apple tree in full blossom, whilst a knight in the background looked at her longingly. The final picture resolved itself into a group of eight girls displayed across the foreground with apple trees in bloom as a background. This apple-blossom was painted with all his previous care, and a note in Lady Millais's diary of the time states that "when the picture was on an easel out of doors and in broad sunlight the bees used often to settle on the bunches of blossom thinking them real flowers from which they might make their honey." This, I fear, must not be taken literally if the theory that bees are attracted by the scent of the flowers be accepted. The insects might have settled on the canvas to rest, but they would not be deceived by the painting of the blossoms, however skilfully done; they could not mistake the odour of turpentine for that of the nectar of the real flowers !

In the autumn of 1858 the artist put into force an intention he had long entertained to paint a picture of nuns, and a gorgeous sunset, which demanded immediate painting, was the spur to the intention. He was at his wife's home at Bowerswell, and the garden wall, with the oaks and poplars behind it, served for a background. The October sunsets were brief, and it necessitated speedy work on the part of the painter to get the effects on his canvas. Fortunately, there was a series of them on successive evenings. The corner of the house itself served for the little chapel in the picture. The open grave was painted in the churchyard of Kinnoull in the winter months. The sexton assisted to this extent by digging a grave specially for

Millais to paint from. His greatest difficulty was with the figure of the nun who is wielding the spade. Mr. J. G. Millais recounts how that "every day for seven weeks" his father painted and repainted her, with the result that the figure was worse than ever, until he and everyone belonging to him was driven frantic. At length his wife hid the picture away from him and refused to divulge where it was for some time. When at length it was restored to him he was able at once to see where he had been wrong and the figure was satisfactorily painted in.

"The Love of James I of Scotland" was not a successful picture, despite some beautiful passages of painting, and it was altogether overshadowed at the Academy by the other two pictures which attracted the full attention of the critics.

"The Vale of Rest" had for its sub-title "Where the weary find repose," and before its exhibition was hailed with delight by the artist's friends, Thackeray and Watts among them. There is no question that the artist himself looked upon it as the best picture he had ever painted. The shock was all the greater, therefore, when this and the "Apple Blossom" were singled out for attack by the critics with a violence that amounted almost to savagery. Ruskin particularly abused "The Vale of Rest" for "crudeness" of colour and the "frightfulness" of the figures, and *Punch* marked 1859 as the year in which "Mr. Millais gave forth those terrible nuns in the churchyard." "Apple Blossom" was objected to for its "fierce and rigid orchard" and by "the angry blooming" of its delicately painted petals.

There is no cause for wonder that Millais was so depressed and disheartened, that he wrote to his wife : "No words can express the curious envy and hatred these works have brought to light. Some of the papers, I believe, have been so violent that for two days together they have poured forth such abuse as was never equalled in the annals of criticism. My works are not understood by the men who set themselves up as judges. *Only when I am dead will they know their worth.*"

He was additionally hurt by the fact that purchasers stood off, influenced, without doubt, by the criticisms; but a ray of sunshine at length broke through the clouds, and an offer was made and accepted for "The Vale of Rest." It was bought through a dealer by Mr. Windus for seven hundred guineas. Commissions also began to come in, and it looked as though the tide of adversity had turned.

G. D. Leslie, R.A., in "The Inner Life of The Royal Academy," expressed surprise that Millais resented so keenly—as shown by his letters to his wife—the abusive criticisms he received at this period. He overlooked the fact that Millais was still a young man; when "The Vale of Rest" was exhibited he had not yet reached his thirtieth birthday, and it is the way of youth to chafe at adverse criticism, even when it is of a kindly nature; when it is obviously unfair and apparently malicious, then keen resentment is to be expected.

Millais, too—perhaps again naturally in view of his youthfulness—was confident that his work was good; it was not until he had reached full maturity —a good many years later—that he had doubts of some of his output and said that he "should not grieve if half my work were sunk to the bottom of the Atlantic—if I might choose the half that was to go." At thirty a successful man can see but little in his work that is not good, and Millais in this respect was no different from the average man.

Through the generosity of Sir Henry Tate (it cost him £3000) "The Vale of Rest" is now the property of the nation, and as one stands before it it is difficult to appreciate in the slightest degree its disparagement by contemporary writers. True, that Millais afterwards repainted the head of the digging nun, thus dulling the point of Ruskin's charge of "ugliness" and *Punch's* "terribleness"; but, in the main, the picture appears as Millais first painted it.

"Time, the greatest of Old Masters," may have mellowed down the "crudeness" of colour which Ruskin found offensive, but, as it stands to-day, it is to me—and to thousands of others—one of the greatest of modern pictures in the National Gallery. The beauty of the sunset sky is, in its way, as arresting as that in Turner's "*Temeraire*"; the painting of the trees and the landscape is not equalled in any other work in the gallery. The whole atmosphere of the scene is in keeping with the line, "Where the weary find repose." The only movement is in the figure of the nun who is digging, and that is subdued and leisurely, as though she were under the influence of the overpowering restfulness. The picture might so easily have suggested morbidness—one slight exaggeration would have done it—but the simplicity and evident sincerity remove all such suggestion from it. It is the peacefulness of the convent graveyard that points the moral of the picture—if it has a moral. It is "The Vale of Rest" without a disturbing factor of

any kind. The turmoil and strife of the world are lost; here the weary may find repose indeed.

With this picture, then, definitely ended the first period of Millais's work. Pre-Raphaelitism could not be abandoned at once: its principles were too firmly grounded in him for that. They continued to be evident in his work for a good many years to come, but they were subordinated to the general purposes of his art. They were not insistently prominent; but they never allowed him, even in his most opulent days, to produce careless work, and there is no question that the severity of the restraint which they had exercised in the early years of his profession never completely wore off.

Up to this point we have followed his work in detail: the remainder of the story must necessarily deal with outstanding performances. The formative years of a man's life are the most important, and the period of Millais's work with which we have dealt was the most important in his career, inasmuch as it was the most difficult. There was the danger at the outset that, with all his great natural talent, he would take the easiest road to material success by following the line of least resistance to popular likes and dislikes in Art. Therein it was fortunate that he fell in with Holman Hunt; otherwise the disciplinary experience of Pre-Raphaelitism would have been missed: he would have walked easily into a successful mediocrity and English Art would have been the poorer. Looking back now on this movement of the 'fifties, it is easy to see the great influence the Pre-Raphaelites had upon our national art. G. D. Leslie expressed the belief in its good influence, "for it promoted accurate and painstaking work and absolute fidelity to Nature, the 'Old Mistress,' as Millais used to call her in contradistinction to the 'Old Masters'; but, above all, the movement was entirely a national one, a purely native product, without a trace of any foreign element. It flourished famously in its native land, but nowhere else, and under its influence the Academy schools certainly produced a large percentage of students who, in after life, greatly distinguished themselves."

## THE MARTYR OF THE SOLWAY

*Painted in* 1871.
*In the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.*

# CHAPTER XI

## Royal Academician (1860-1870)

IN the Academy of 1860, Millais was represented by but one picture, the celebrated "The Black Brunswicker," intended from its first conception as a "perfect pendant" to "The Huguenot," an intention which received ample fulfilment when the engraving appeared, for even now it is seldom that the plates are met with except together. The picture represents a young officer of the famous Prussian regiment taking leave of his fiancée on the eve of Waterloo. He is in the black uniform which distinguished this crack cavalry corps and holds in his right hand the busby with its horrible insignia of skull and cross bones. The girl, in a white satin dress, is evidently trying to postpone her lover's departure in response to the call to arms: while her efforts are being assisted by the mute appeal of a little dog which sits "begging" at his feet.

The figure of the girl was painted from Dickens's daughter, who afterwards became the wife of C. E. Perugini, the artist, and was herself a painter of great ability. The model for the "Brunswicker" was a young lifeguardsman, chosen by Millais himself at a parade of the regiment for his fine physique and good looks. A uniform of the Prussian corps was secured for the sake of complete accuracy, and for three months the artist worked solely on this picture, completing it just in time for the Academy. It was bought by Gambart, the dealer, for 1000 guineas. When it appeared in the saleroom, two years later, Messrs. Graves secured it for £819, but in 1898 it was sold for £2650.

At the Academy it gained immediate popular success, and was hailed as "the picture of the year." Millais in a letter to his wife wrote: "My picture certainly looks very satisfactory. There is nothing in the exhibition to attract, but Phillip's, Landseer's, and mine."

It was at this period—1859 to 1864—that Millais did his wonderful work as an illustrator. It must be remembered that at this time the artist made his drawing the exact size of the intended illustration, on a block of

boxwood over which the engraver worked. It was work that demanded close application, sure skill, and accurate knowledge of the subject to be dealt with. The remuneration was utterly disproportionate to the value of the work to publishers, but this in nowise affected the quality of Millais's drawings: into them he put the very best of his talent, as reference to early numbers of *Once a Week* and *Cornhill* will testify, although once again it must be remembered that we only see therein the engravers' translation of the artist's work. In spite of this there is evidence unfailing and unmistakable, of his wondrous skill as a draughtsman, his great appreciation of light and shade, his dramatic force, within the limitations of such a medium. His illustrations to Anthony Trollope's "Orley Farm," "The Small House at Allington," and "Framley Parsonage," are landmarks in the renaissance of black and white art which marked the late fifties and early sixties of last century.

His greatest triumph in this direction was undoubtedly the series of nineteen "Parables of Our Lord," in which he exhibited the full force of his power as an artist in black and white.

Several of these designs on wood were afterwards taken as subjects for paintings. Thus "The Mite of Dorcas" became "The Widow's Mite" of 1870, and "A Fair Jacobite," which also appeared in *Once a Week*, was painted under the title of "Charlie is My Darling" (1864). Two of the "Parable" series were also translated into colour; "The Lost Piece of Silver Money" (1862) which was acquired by Baron Marochetti and destroyed soon afterwards in a gas explosion in the famous sculptor's house; "The Evil One Sowing Tares" appeared in the Academy of 1865, but the painting, in spite of its gorgeously painted sky, is not nearly so impressive as the wood engraving. There is a record of the complete set in colour, in the form of a memorial window to his son George, in Kinnoull church—the son who as the fair-haired lad, figures in "The Boyhood of Raleigh" and who died in early youth.

At the Academy of 1861, Millais was unrepresented, but in 1862 he had four works, "The Ransom," "Trust Me," "The Lost Piece of Silver Money," and a portrait of "Mrs. Charles Freeman" (now in the Manchester Gallery). In 1863, appeared the first of the long series of child pictures, which he painted from his own children as models—"My First Sermon." His daughter Effie—then five years of age—sat for this delightful piece of

child characterization; the expression of subdued wonderment as to what all the talking is about on the part of the man in the pulpit is evidence that Millais found delight in studying the children now about his house. This demure little maiden in her red frock* captured the hearts of the public and fully atoned for the plainness—some had called it frankly, ugliness—of the children in "The Woodman's Daughter," "Autumn Leaves," and "The Blind Girl."

Another picture of this year's Academy was "The Eve of St. Agnes"—one of his "great" pictures, and one of those for which the artist himself had the greatest liking. It was exhibited with the following quotation from Keats:—

"Full on this casement shone the wintry moon
. . . . . .
. . . her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant boddice: by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile, she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled."

Standing in the centre of a patch of moonlight—so strong is the light that the colours of the window through which it comes are suggested—the partially disrobed Madeline stands a figure of pathetic grace. The room was painted from one in Knole House, at Sevenoaks, and the work was done under the conditions of the picture—at midnight. Lady Millais posed for the figure in conditions of discomfort which can well be imagined—midnight in winter, in this ghostly old room, unheated—for three nights in succession while the sketch was being made.

These two pictures secured for him the election to the full membership of the Academy in the autumn of 1863. That he should have had to wait ten years for promotion seems difficult to understand, for his work justified an earlier recognition. In this deferred honour lies the gravamen of the charge against the Academy of indifference to the talent of this child of their own schools. In all other respects they treated him well—his pictures

*He was curiously fond of experimenting with this colour, an experimenting that was to achieve its crowning success some years later in "A Yeoman of the Guard."

were always hung, and with the one exception of "The Rescue," hung well, but the bestowal of the crowning honour was withheld. There can be no doubt that his adherence to Pre-Raphaelitism was the cause of it; to the older members of the Academy, he and it were anathema, and it was only when the coveted membership could not in decency be longer deferred that it was accorded.

"Leisure Hours" and "My Second Sermon" were the contributions to the Academy of 1864. The latter had been painted the previous year immediately after its companion picture, and, of course, from the same model, his daughter Effie. This delightful pair of child studies now hang in the Guildhall Art Gallery, bequeathed thereto by Mr. Gassiot.

"Charlie is My Darling" (1864) and "Swallow, Swallow" of 1865 did not mark progress on the part of the painter—they rather suggested that Millais was merely doing what he told Holman Hunt he *should* do—give the public "what they wanted" without regard to the quality of his work. Indeed, apart from one or two of his pictures of children—to which reference will be made in a subsequent chapter—there is nothing to arrest attention except "Jephthah" (1867)—which was bought at the Mendel sale by Lord Armstrong for £3900—"The Evil One Sowing Tares" (R.A. 1865)—which has intense dramatic force both in the figure of the sower and the colouring of the sky—until we come to 1868 when Millais definitely threw off the Pre-Raphaelite influence and produced a series of works that were almost as startling as those of his early youth. "Stella," "Sisters," "A Souvenir of Velasquez," and "Rosalind and Celia," all of which appeared in the Academy of that year were painted with a freedom and dash that revealed the painter's skill and power anew to public and critics alike. The "Stella"—now in the Manchester Gallery—is reproduced in these pages, and in the comparison it affords with "Autumn Leaves" or "Ophelia" the change in technique is admirably exemplified.

The "Souvenir of Velasquez" was presented as his diploma work to the Royal Academy, and thereby hangs a tale to account for this belated acknowledgment of his election to full membership. Millais had offered the picture of 1865, "The Evil One Sowing Tares," to the Academy, and to his astonishment he was informed that the picture was not acceptable. It looked as though some ill fate overshadowed his relations with the Academy, for such action on the part of the Council was unprecedented. There is a

legend that some of the members saw in the figure of the "Evil One" a likeness to one of their members and, resenting such "guying" on the part of the artist, voted for its rejection. Be this as it may, the picture *was* returned, and the artist waited for three years to perform the necessary act to complete his election.

The "Sisters"—portraits of the artist's daughters, Mary, Effie, and Alice—gained admiration on all sides although it was hung "above the line" in accordance with the rule for half-length portraits. G. D. Leslie recounts that he was "admiring it when Millais came up. Evidently he was considerably annoyed by its position, but he said he was not going to complain as he knew about the rule and because Calderon, who was a hanger, was such a good fellow. It was my first experience of the invariable good nature and consideration which Millais at all times displayed towards his fellow artists."

"Vanessa," a companion work to "Stella"—painted in the same year, and in the same manner—appeared at the Academy in 1869 in company with "The Gambler's Wife," "A Dream of Dawn," "The End of the Chapter," and two portraits. Of these, "The Gambler's Wife" was the most noteworthy. It forms another of the series of "beautiful women" pictures to which belong "Vanessa" and "Stella." It has been ranked as "a masterpiece" by Mr. Spielmann, in his notes upon the Memorial Exhibition.

In 1870, Millais again sent his full quota of six works to the Academy, two of which were portraits. The four subject pictures are among the best known of his works, for all now hang in public galleries. "The Widow's Mite" is at Birmingham, "A Flood" at Manchester, "The Boyhood of Raleigh" and "The Knight Errant" are in the Tate Collection at Millbank. Each demands more than a passing word, and collectively they are noteworthy as marking the painter's rapid development in his altered method of painting. "The Widow's Mite" alone offered any suggestion of Pre-Raphaelitism; the others were painted with a breadth of touch that exhibited Millais's wonderful facility at its best. "A Flood" is a remarkable work in several ways; in its depiction of the devastating waters, which was done at Windsor when the Thames had overflowed its banks; in its wonderful painting of the child in the cradle. His own little daughter Sophie served him as model—and perhaps as inspiration—for this work; in any case, it is a magnificent rendering of the beauty of infancy which alone is sufficient to maintain the artist's reputation. Then again, there is the melancholy

figure of the kitten perched on the cradle with instinct-prompted attitude of fear, contrasting forcibly with the placidity of the child, all unconscious of its imminent danger. And lastly, there is the exquisitely painted goldfinch perched on the bough which stretches across the top of the picture, a glittering little object which has attracted the attention of the child who raises her chubby hands as though to grasp it.

When Millais saw this picture fifteen years later, at the Grosvenor Gallery exhibition of his work, he thought he could improve it, and also restore some of the parts in which the colour had slightly deteriorated. The owner consented, but when he saw the retouchings he at once exclaimed that Millais had spoilt his picture. The painter, with the wipe of a turpentine rag, removed his new work—with one exception—where there now floats a pitcher beside the cradle, there was a pig.

"The Boyhood of Raleigh" was suggested to the artist after reading Froude's "English Worthies," and his two sons, Everett and George, served as models for Raleigh and his brother. It is one of the very few instances in which Millais introduced the sea into his pictures; the details, such as the starfish lying on the beach, the seaweed, the stuffed birds, and dried flowers are painted with the same care as were the roses in "Ophelia," but with the freedom born of later experience.

"The Knight Errant" (exhibited with the note, "The Order of Knights Errant was instituted to protect widows and orphans and to succour maidens in distress") is noteworthy as the only instance in Millais's career in which he painted a nude figure. He declared that the picture gave him more trouble than any he ever painted, save the "Mercy" of later years, although it occupied him for but six weeks. The figure of the "maiden" is an excellent piece of flesh painting, but the work shocked the public of 1870; Mrs. Grundy protested vigorously against the nudity, and—a rare thing for the artist at that time—the picture came back from the Academy unsold. When first painted, the distressed damsel was represented with her head turned to the spectator, but, after the picture had hung for some time in one of his rooms, Millais decided that this was unsatisfactory, and he repainted the head as it is to-day. The picture remained on his hands for some considerable time, but was at length sold to a dealer, who in turn sold it to "Baron" Albert Grant. At the sale of his collection in 1877, it changed hands for £1500 and finally was acquired by Sir Henry Tate.

# VICTORY, O LORD!

"So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

"And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

"But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun."

—*Exodus* xvii, 10, 11, 12.

*Painted* 1871. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy*, 1871.

*In the City Art Gallery, Manchester.*

# CHAPTER XII

## Royal Academician and President (1871-1896)

TO the Academy of 1871 Millais contributed five works, and for the first time in his career was represented by a picture of pure landscape—"Chill October." There was one portrait, that of "George Grote," which now hangs in University College, and three subject pictures, "Victory, O Lord!" "The Somnambulist," and "Yes or No?"

Millais had, for many years, longed to represent on canvas some of the scenes around his Scottish home. The country had captured his heart, and he grudged greatly the time which his work demanded should be spent in London. In the autumn of 1870 this desire became overwhelming in its intensity, and he decided to satisfy it forthwith. The scene selected was a quiet backwater of the Tay, about five miles below Perth—a wild and desolate spot of reeds and rushes, the home of many water-fowl. True the railway skirts it, but by turning one's back on the steel highway there can be seen the view presented by the artist with the closest fidelity. It is Nature in frank primitiveness, with all her innate beauty faithfully and lovingly interpreted in paint. There is no idealization, no attempt to "compose" a subject, no striving to improve upon Nature. It was actually painted in October under difficulties which the artist himself recorded on the back of the canvas in the following manner :—

" 'Chill October' was painted from a backwater of the Tay, just below Kinfauns, near Perth. The scene, simple as it is, had impressed me for years before I painted it. The traveller between Perth and Dundee passes the spot where I stood. Danger on either side—the tide, which once carried away my platform, and the trains, which threatened to blow my work into the river. I chose the subject for the sentiment it always conveyed to my mind, and I am happy to think that the transcript touched the public in a like manner, although many of my friends at the time were at a loss to understand what I saw to paint in such a scene. I made no sketch for it, but painted every touch from Nature, on the canvas itself, under irritating trials of wind and rain. The only studio work was in connexion with the effect."

The reproduction of the picture in this volume gives an excellent record of it, with one allowance for the difference in size of the original work—55 in. by 73 in. "The sentiment" to which the artist refers in his note is plainly evident: the sentiment attaching to such a scene under the influence of "chill October," when the grim hand of winter is already extending towards the land it will soon hold in its withering grip. It will be noticed that Millais had no delusions about the work. He calls it a "transcript from Nature": he saw no reason for excusing it on that account: his effort was to represent the scene as he saw it, and the effort resulted in a masterpiece of workmanship as well as a triumph of "sentiment." As such, it satisfies the average man, let the eclectic in art sneer as he may.

Mr. J. G. Millais tells a good story concerning the picture which is well worth repeating as it represents the other extreme outlook on art. He records that by arrangement with the station-master at Kinfauns, the canvas was stored in his room at the close of each day's work, and the assistance of the porter was granted each morning and evening in its transport to and from the scene of the painting. The man was proud of his share in the work, and when the picture was finished he always spoke of it as "the picture *we* made doon by the watter-side." "Ye see," he would say to inquirers, "Mr. Mullus wud sit heer a' day, jist titch, titch wi' they bit brushes. A' dinna ken how the man cud dae it, it was that cauld." After the sale of the picture was announced he was seen by Mr. George Gray—the artist's brother-in-law—who was at once tackled on the subject. "Is it true," he was asked, "as I was seein' i' the papers, that Mr. Mullus has got a thoosand pounds for yon picture he painted heer?" "Oh yes, Jock," was the reply, "that's all right." "Weel," said Jock, after a moment's reflection, "it's a verra funny thing, but a' wudna hae gien half-a-croon for it ma sel."

Lord Armstrong secured the picture at the Mendel sale, in 1875, for £3255, and in 1878 it was awarded the *Grand Prix* at the Paris International Exhibition.

"Yes or No?" is another of the single figure pictures of which Millais was fond at this period; the title sufficiently suggests the picture itself—a young girl standing by a table on which lies a letter of obvious intent. Her hands are crossed behind her and in one of them is a photograph. Millais afterwards painted two sequels—one "each way." The artist's sister-in-law, Mrs. Stibbard posed for this first picture of the series.

"Victory, O Lord!"—or "Moses," as it is sometimes called—represents Moses, Aaron, and Hur on the mountain-top, while Joshua is "fighting the battle of the Lord" against the Amalekites in the plains below, as related in Exodus xvii. The picture was purchased by the Manchester Corporation in 1894, after it had twice previously appeared in the saleroom; at the Albert Grant sale in 1877, it was purchased by Agnews for £2047, but in 1892 it was "bought in" for £1260. The figures are life-size, and F. G. Stephens, in the *Athenæum* notice of the Royal Academy exhibition, wrote of the work, "Mr. Millais has had this picture on hand during several years past, it does him great honour, and redounds to his credit more than many of his recent works."

In 1871 was painted "The Martyr of the Solway," the picture in the Liverpool Gallery and reproduced in this volume. Curiously enough the canvas is undated; it was shown at the Memorial Exhibition, and no date of its execution was given in the catalogue. Mr. J. G. Millais makes no reference whatever to it in his record of his father's work, but merely includes it in the list of works at the end of the book, under the date given.

It is a representation of Margaret Wilson who, in 1685, with another, Margaret M'Lauchlan, was condemned as a Covenanter, and sentenced to death by drowning. They were tied to stakes in Wigtown Bay and left until the rising tide ended their misery. The story is related in the ballad by Professor Blackie, entitled, "The Two Meek Margarets."

"The one had three score years and three;
Far out on the sand they bound her,
Where the first dark flow of the waves as they grow
Is quickly swirling round her.

The other was a maiden fresh and fair;
More near to the land they bound her,
That she might see by slow degrees
The grim waves creeping round her!"

There is a monument to the memory of the two maiden martyrs in the Valley Cemetery, Stirling.

The picture was presented to the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, in 1895, by Mr. George Holt.

The year 1872 brought still further success, for in that year were exhibited three of his finest works in portraiture, "Sir James Paget," "The Marquess of Westminster," and "Hearts are Trumps." In addition there

was a portrait of "Master Liddell," and the joyous little landscape, "Flowing to the Sea," illustrated in this volume.

This last-mentioned picture was painted the same year as "Chill October." It is another scene on the Tay—at Waukmill Ferry—and in strong contrast to the large picture painted later in the season. It is full of sunlight, with blue sky and river, while the splash of colour of the tunics of the two soldiers (42nd Highlanders), and the figure of the girl, lend a joyousness to the scene in keeping with the sentiment of the landscape.

But it was "Hearts are Trumps" that marked his greatest achievement up to that point of his career. It is without question, one of his finest works, and takes its place among the masterpieces of modern British art. Mr. J. G. Millais says that it was painted in reply to an assertion of a critic of his father's work, that "successful as he was in certain branches of his art, he was quite incapable of making such a picture of three beautiful women together in the dress of the period as Sir Joshua Reynolds had produced in his famous portrait of 'The Ladies Waldegrave.' "

It was an unfair challenge to begin with, for fashionable dress of the seventies of the nineteenth century had attained the height of hideousness, which was added to by the prevalent ugliness of coiffure. Millais might well have refused such a challenge on this account alone, but when he read it he at once picked up the gauntlet and set to work on his canvas. He was then in the plenitude of his power, and determined to show that he could not be daunted by the most difficult of problems.

He secured for his models three beautiful sisters—the Misses Armstrong —who were afterwards known as Mrs. Tennant-Dunlop, Mrs. Secker, and Mrs. Ponsonby Blennerhassett. He designed for them dresses of grey—with monstrous "bustles" and voluminous skirts—with pink sashes fastened by huge bows at the back. They are seated at three sides of a card-table and are engaged in a game of dummy whist. The one at the left is seen in profile with cards held between her two hands, and on the table is the "dummy hand" duly exposed. The central figure is seen full face and the one on the right has her face turned towards the spectator as though inviting inspection of her "hand," which is held fan-wise so that the cards are visible. They are seated in a conservatory, with azaleas and a Chinese screen as background. It is essentially a picture of the period; and is as clever in its arrangement as it is skilful in execution. There is nothing to suggest the

Millais of the "Mariana" or "The Huguenot"; true, every detail, from the "pips" on the cards to the flowers on the wall, is recorded, but it is "with a difference" from that of twenty years or so before. The painter had mastered his methods, and was no longer dominated by them.

The picture was a success in every way. It captured the public of the year it was exhibited—to whom the dresses presented nothing incongruous ; they were the *mode* of the time—and on each subsequent occasion of its exhibition its greatness has been acclaimed equally loudly.

Sir Walter Armstrong, brother of the ladies who are portrayed, thus wrote of it in a Millais special number of *The Art Journal*, in 1885 :—

"Few of Sir John Millais's pictures, perhaps none, made a greater sensation on their appearance at the Academy than this group of three young girls. The arrangement is, of course, not a little reminiscent of a famous Sir Joshua, but there is a *bravura* in the execution, and a union of respect for the minutest vagaries of fashion with breadth of hand and unity of result, which has never been excelled since the days of Don Diego Velasquez.

"And here I may pause for a moment to contrast the modern painter's way of going to work with that of his forerunners of a few generations ago. In the picture last mentioned there are many accessories : a tall Chinese screen; a bank of red, white, and yellow azaleas; a card-table; an Oriental *guéridon* with an empty tea-cup; and all these, as well as the wide-spreading draperies of the three girls, were painted entirely by the hand of the master, which, moreover, had previously designed the grey dresses with their pink ribbons and yellow lace. In all this the distance is wide enough between the work of Millais and the 'Waldegraves' of Reynolds, in which, as Walpole tells us, the *journeyman* had finished the table, etc., with the minuteness of a Dutch flower-painter. During the lifetime of the late Lady Waldegrave a small copy of Millais's picture used to hang at Strawberry Hill, near the group of Walpole's nieces. It served, at least, to show how slight was the fancied debt from the modern to the little less than modern master."

The picture was shown in Paris in 1878, under the title of "Whist à Trois," and secured an equally striking success. When it was at the Memorial Exhibition of Millais's works, at the Academy twenty years later, Mr. M. H. Spielmann wrote of it : "it remains a noble canvas, and by itself fills the room in which it hangs." When it was last shown in London—I think at the Grafton Galleries—it again attracted attention immediately by

its beauty and exquisite craftsmanship, and easily took its place as an "old master" among the "moderns" by which it was surrounded.

Portraiture at this period occupied Millais's chief attention and, as particular reference will be made to his work in this direction in a subsequent chapter, the mere record of it chronologically will suffice here. At the Academy of 1873 were two of his best pictures of women—one of a very old lady, Mrs. Heugh—and the other of a very beautiful woman, Mrs. Bischoffsheim—each of which has become a classic in British portraiture. "Sir William Sterndale Bennett" was another success of this year. There was no subject picture of importance, but in 1874 came "The North-West Passage," with a landscape, "The Fringe of the Moor," and a portrait of Miss Alice Caroline Millais, exhibited under the title of "The Picture of Health."

"The North-West Passage" is probably the most widely known of Millais's pictures from the number of times it has been reproduced in popular publications. Although it represents no distinct incident in the story of Arctic discovery, it expresses the patriotic spirit which has prompted Englishmen in every age to venture forth into the unknown. The sub-title of the picture, "It might be done, and England should do it," helps to this end. As a matter of actual fact, the North-West passage had long been sailed through when this picture was painted, so that its bearing was a more general one on Arctic discovery. The figure of the "ancient mariner" listening entranced to his daughter's reading of the stories of explorers and adventurers towards the Pole, with the outspread map on which the courses are being followed, captured the popular fancy, aided, perhaps, by the Union Jack draped down one side of the picture. As examples of Millais's technical powers, some of the details of this picture are difficult to equal—the texture of the bunting, the glass of untasted grog standing at the old man's elbow are wonderful bits of painting. They are not offensive in their rendering: they are reminiscences of the period when truth of detail was the object aimed at in the artist's work.

The model for the mariner was "Captain" Trelawney, an old man with an adventurous career, which included capture by Greek pirates and a marriage with the Pirate Chief's daughter. He had been a friend of Shelley and Byron, and was involved with them in their adventures in the Near East. He and Millais had met at the funeral of John Leech, and a friendship sprang up between them on account of the mutual esteem they held for the great *Punch* artist.

## FLOWING TO THE SEA

*Painted* 1870. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy*, 1872.

*In Private Possession.*

A first application to him to "sit" for the picture was blankly refused, and the painter was diffident of approaching him again, but he longed greatly for him as he considered him an ideal model for the part of the mariner. At last, Millais's wife determined to "beard the lion," and Mr. J. G. Millais tells us that Trelawney consented on condition that she would buy and use some tickets for some Turkish baths in which he had a financial interest, he, in return, guaranteeing to give six sittings to her husband. The deal was made and duly fulfilled, with the result that a virtual portrait of Trelawney appears in the picture. He, however, was a strict teetotaller, and when he saw the picture in the Academy was furious at the introduction of the grog, of which there was no indication when he was acting as model. The flag, too, was an addition, for it covers up the position which at first was occupied by two children and a terrestrial globe. The picture was bought by Mr. Bolckow, and at his sale, in 1888, was bought by Agnew for £4500. It was afterwards secured by Sir Henry Tate and presented by him to the nation.

In 1875 appeared the fine portrait of Miss Eveleen Tennant (Mrs. F. W. H. Myers), in which, once more, red plays a large part in the colour-scheme, and which serves as a decoration on the cover of this volume. This year, another notable landscape, "The Deserted Garden," was shown, with "No," one of the sequels to "Yes or No?" of a few years previous. Portraits and landscape ("Over the Hills and Far Away") marked the next year, but in 1877 he startled Academy-goers with his great picture, "A Yeoman of the Guard."

Such a painting had been in his mind since 1875, when he received a commission for a large picture of the ceremonial at Westminster prior to the opening of Parliament, when the cellars are inspected by the Yeomen of the Guard in their picturesque uniforms. For this purpose he went to the Tower to study the "Beefeaters" and their gorgeous clothing. The commission was abandoned, but the impression of the scarlet tunics and gay ribbons remained, with the determination to interpret it on canvas. A model was found in Major Robert Montagu, a veteran soldier, over eighty years of age. It was a courageous thing for Millais to attempt, this blaze of scarlet and gold, but he was sure of himself and never had mere technical difficulties deterred him from any project. His model was ideal, with his white hair and beard and fine face, and the enthusiasm for the subject became almost an inspiration. In its successful accomplishment Millais

reached the high-water mark of his talent: if he painted but *one* masterpiece, then it is "A Yeoman of the Guard," and it takes its place as one of the great pictures of modern times. Through the generosity of Mr. Hodgkinson it belongs to the nation, and when it is in its place on the walls of the Tate Gallery it arrests the eye immediately one enters the room in which it hangs. Unfortunately, the idea that the National collection is a *permanent* one is quite fallacious. At the time of writing, "A Yeoman of the Guard" has reposed for some time in the cellars of the gallery. The exhibition of the picture in Paris in 1878 made a forcible impression on French artists and critics alike; Meissonier, among the former, confessed that it informed him of the fact that "England had a great school and a great painter"; while M. Ernest Chesneau, of the critics, wrote :—

"The Pre-Raphaelite who had formerly so strictly followed the rules of the school, that the faithful carrying out of detail had been almost an infatuation for him, had now freed himself from so slavish a yoke, without losing the respect he bore it, or failing to recognize the worth of the system. Since that time the years have rolled on, carrying the master, step by step, to a fuller realization of his artistic aspirations. Mr. Millais's ten pictures exhibited in the Champs-de-Mars did not give a true estimate of his high talent and many-sided powers, which enable him to treat all branches of art with a like facility and superiority. . . . . The chief place in the large panel, where most of Mr. Millais's pictures were hung, was occupied by a splendid portrait, that of 'A Yeoman of the Guard' in the Tower of London. Gravely seated, with his walking-stick in his hand, the yeoman, whose breast is ornamented with numerous medals, maintains a most dignified bearing, although arrayed in the singular costume of a 'Beefeater,' one of those gorgeous uniforms, the remnants of a bygone age, which have been preserved, alike through centuries and revolutions, at Windsor and the Vatican only. With the exception of the black hat, surrounded by a tricoloured ribbon, the whole costume—coat, breeches, and leggings, is of bright scarlet cloth.

"Mr. Millais has rendered this unmitigated blaze of red with extraordinarily powerful effect, and indeed, he excels in such daring attempts. The gaoler's red coat in 'The Order of Release' was the first example; another was given in 1875, when in a portrait of Miss Eveleen Tennant he painted the young girl in a vivid red dress. In the yeoman's portrait the

gold and dark blue of the waist-band, shoulder-belt, and ornamentation round the coat, the different shades of white of the buckskin gloves and goffered ruff around his neck, the black of the hat, and the dark brown background, on which one sees, sharply delineated, the blue steel of two halberds, all serve by their contrast to throw up more brilliantly the predominating scarlet. The old yeoman's face, taken in three-quarter view and fringed by a short white beard, is executed in a manner which might seem clumsy beside the skilful manipulation of our French painters. But the execution, which at first sight appears wanting in firmness, on closer inspection shows such a knowledge of the management of flesh-tint that, setting aside the ordinary method, it reproduces in a wonderful manner the various tones of which the drawn and wrinkled skin of an aged face is composed. To those who know how to appreciate it, the 'Yeoman of the Guard' conveys a valuable lesson in faithful rendering."

At the 1877 Academy appeared also "Stitch, Stitch" (a small picture which the artist presented to G. F. Watts, R.A.), a figure of a sempstress painted from the same model that sat for the mariner's daughter in "The North-West Passage." This, with "Yes," represented the artist's subject work there, which was supplemented by one landscape, "The Sound of Many Waters," and several portraits; "Effie Deans," which belongs to this year, was shown at a gallery in King Street.

The next few years were taken up principally with portraits and the series of pretty children to which fuller reference will be made later. Chief among the former were "A Jersey Lily" (1878) (Mrs. Langtry), "Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone" (1880)—of which more presently—"Rt. Hon. John Bright" (1880), "Alfred, Lord Tennyson" (1881), "Cardinal Newman" (1882), "Sir Henry Thompson" (1882)—now in the Tate Gallery—and "The Duchess of Westminster" (1882).

Among the most notable of the pictures of children were "The Princes in the Tower" (1881)—now in the Royal Holloway College—"The Princess Elizabeth" (1881), "Sweetest Eyes were Ever Seen" (1881), and "Cinderella" (1882).

As a portraitist, Millais was now the most sought amongst the painters: his successes were many, and one of his greatest was with the portrait of Gladstone, painted in 1879. The sittings were given at the invitation of the artist who had received the commission from the Duke of Westminster, at the time when Gladstone was planning his "Bulgarian Atrocities" campaign

and using all his energy to arouse feeling against England going to war with Russia on behalf of Turkey. Gladstone proved an ideal sitter, and the painter an ideal listener; the former said afterwards that "it was most enjoyable to sit to Millais, not because he talks, but to see him at his work is a delight, for the way he throws his heart and soul into it." This must, indeed, have been the case, for this great portrait—one of the greatest of modern times—was completed so far as the sitter was concerned in sittings which aggregated to five hours.

The subsequent story of the portrait is interesting to recall. It remained a treasured possession of the Duke of Westminster until Gladstone inaugurated his policy of Home Rule for Ireland: then the picture was turned with its face to the wall. The estrangement between the duke and Gladstone became more and more acute as the Irish policy of the latter developed, and finally even the statesman's portrait became unbearable to its owner, and it was sold to Sir Charles Tennant. In 1891 it was presented by Sir Charles to the nation, and now hangs in the National Gallery, a worthy memorial both of statesman and painter.

Portraits and pictures of children, with an occasional landscape represented Millais's works for some years, and it was almost an event when a subject picture went to an exhibition from his studio. There is one work of interest, however, which belongs to this period and which was not seen by the public until 1897 when it was presented to the Tate Gallery by an anonymous donor. This was the "Nell Gwynne" or, as it is catalogued, "An Equestrian Portrait," a picture which was commenced by Landseer as a portrait of Queen Victoria, of which that painter had done nothing but the horse, when he was overtaken by death in 1873. One of his last expressed wishes was that three pictures left in an unfinished condition should be completed by Millais—a wish that could not be carried out for many years afterwards. It was in 1882 that he completed the "Equestrian Portrait." Landseer had sketched the design for the work in pen and ink. With his daughter for model, Millais painted the figure of "Sweet Nell of Old Drury" on the horse, and the figures of the page and the dog in the foreground. Mr. J. G. Millais relates rather triumphantly, that a celebrated art critic called at the studio when the picture was just completed and, having heard its origin, said, "How easily one can recognize Landseer's dogs! Wonderful, isn't

it?" "Yes, it *is wonderful*," replied Millais, "I finished painting that dog yesterday morning and have done the whole of it myself."

In 1884 "An Idyll, 1745" was shown at the Academy, and represented a boy of the English "drums and fifes" entertaining three little Scottish girls with music on his fife. Once again, in the uniform of the young soldier, Millais was able to indulge his liking for a flare of scarlet. The next year saw "The Ruling Passion"—originally called "The Ornithologist." It was suggested by a visit the artist paid with his son, Mr. John Guille Millais, to John Gould, the ornithologist, whose wonderful collection of humming-birds is one of the features of the Natural History Museum at South Kensington, for which it was purchased at his death. At the time of Millais's visit the naturalist was a confirmed invalid, and had to get his two daughters to assist him in displaying the specimens he loved so much. The figure in the picture was not painted from him, however, but from the artist's old friend, T. O. Barlow, the engraver—then almost at the end of his days. The picture was painted as a commission, but when it was completed the artist was asked to cancel the agreement as the central figure in his invalid condition painfully reminded the purchaser of a severe illness through which he himself had recently passed. Millais consented, and kept the picture himself. It was sold in 1899 for £892.

It received a good reception at the Academy, and even Ruskin once more had praise for a work by Millais. "I have never seen any work of modern art," he wrote, "with more delight and admiration than this." But it cannot be accounted altogether successful—the figures are too crowded, and as Mr. J. G. Millais points out it would have been greatly improved by the omission of the two children, as was done in the case of "The North-West Passage."

It was in 1885 that—up to that time—the unique honour of a baronetcy was conferred upon Millais : a similar honour was offered to G. F. Watts, but he having "a strong sense of the dignity of proportion," declined it as he felt it to be incongruous with his "very limited means." This reason could not be advanced by Millais, and he thus became the first artist in the history of English art to bear the hereditary title. A curious position was thus created, for the President of the Royal Academy was still but a knight, an anomaly that was rectified the next year by the bestowal of the higher honour on Leighton. Some years later he was elevated to the peerage.

Among the noteworthy portraits of 1885 was the second one of Gladstone

in his robes as LL.D. which is now at Christ Church, Oxford. It is as characteristic as the first, for while the latter represents the statesman in contemplative mood, this shows him alert, combative. It was painted when Gladstone's second premiership was drawing to a close, and the great Liberal Party, of which he had been the idol for so many years, was on the point of disruption because of their leader's policy concerning Ireland.

"Bubbles" belongs to 1886, and on account of its use for advertising purposes attained a world-wide reputation. There was a violent outpouring in the Press, from a certain section of the art community which protested wrathfully against such "debasement" of art, but Millais himself, after a first furious protest against the idea, when he saw the reproduction of the picture as a poster, although it was never intended by him for such a purpose, accepted the situation. A portrait of his grandson—Willie James—it was painted purely for his own gratification when he saw the youngster actually amusing himself with a pipe and a basin of soapy water. The picture was purchased with all rights by *The Illustrated London News*, and after its publication as a supplement in that journal, was sold—again with all rights—to Mr. Barratt of Pears' Soap fame.

In 1886 occurred the exhibition of the artist's collected works at the Grosvenor Gallery. There had been a small exhibition at the Fine Art Society, in 1881, when only nineteen of his pictures were shown. But at the Grosvenor there were one hundred and thirty-two oil-paintings, and thirty other works : a collection that was insured for £250,000. Millais took great interest in the exhibition, and not only superintended the hanging of the works, but corrected the notes in the catalogue. F. G. Stephens related the delight with which the artist once more looked on "The Huguenot" after an interval of thirty years. It was apparently in the precise condition in which it left the Academy in 1853 and, after it was taken from the packing-case, Millais had it removed from the frame and, holding it in his hands commented on the colours he had used and on incidents connected with its painting; as he handed it back he said, "Really, I did not paint so badly in those days ! "—a naïve conceit which can readily be excused.

He was due to dine at Leighton's house on the day the exhibition was completed, and he arrived somewhat late. "Quick," he exclaimed to his host, in an exhausted tone, "give me some champagne, I'm quite ill." After a drink, he went on : "I've been seeing all my old work !—all my past

# THE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE

"It might be done, and England should do it."

*Painted* 1874. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy*, 1874.

*In the National Gallery British Art.*

misdeeds have been rising up against me! Oh, the *vulgarity* of some of them, my dear fellow; the vulgarity! *But some fine things mind you.*"

At the Academy of 1887 appeared "Mercy, St. Bartholomew's Day, 1572," which now hangs in the Tate Gallery. It was intended for a picture of tragedy, but it only succeeded in being melodramatic and is one of his acknowledged failures. He, himself, was utterly disappointed with it, for he wrote to Briton Riviere concerning it: "I have done the picture . . . I am sometimes happy over it, but oftener wretched." It had occupied him for four months, and he probably had more trouble with it and took more care with it than with any other picture he ever painted. Lady Granby posed for the figure of the nun, and the Rev. Richard Lear for the monk, and, while the actual painting is good, the picture as a whole is utterly unimpressive. Millais was once very indignant when a critic referred to a portion of one of his pictures as an example of summary carelessness. This particular "bit"—it was a sleeve of a costume—had caused him endless trouble before he had succeeded in getting it satisfactory to himself, and had actually painted it five times before leaving it. "It may be bad," he said, "but if so, it was the care that did it." So with the "Mercy"—it was the evident striving, the overwrought care that killed the picture. That was an "off year," indeed, for the painter. Two pictures shown at McLean's Gallery, "Allegro" and "Penseroso," were weak and quite unworthy of his reputation.

The following year saw his "Murthly Moss, Perthshire" at the Academy, a landscape that once again exhibited his skill as a painter of wild nature, while in 1889 came "Murthly Water" and "The Old Garden," two pictures that afforded striking instance of the variability of his power. The former was weak and uninteresting, the latter recalled some of the exquisite power of "The Vale of Rest." It was painted in the garden of Murthly Castle, and the only departure from actuality was the introduction of a fountain from another part of the garden in the left foreground. Sir Claude Phillips has referred to it as "the artist's masterpiece in this branch of his practice." It is probably one of his most poetic achievements: its simplicity, its atmosphere of quiet and solitude, its excellence of workmanship, all combine to render it a work of notable charm.

In the later years there were several more landscapes worthy of note. "Dew-drenched Furze" and "The Moon is up and yet it is not Night," were both painted in 1890, but the former was not exhibited until 1891;

"Glen Birnam" (1891) is one of the three snow pictures which he painted, and is illustrated in this volume. "Blow, blow thou Winter Wind" and "Halcyon Weather" were both exhibited in 1892—one a snow picture and the other a glowing scene of high summer in which an exquisitely painted kingfisher flits across the canvas.

The other pictures of note of the closing period were portraits of Mr. Gladstone and his Grandson (1890), "John Hare" (1893), and "Sir Richard Quain" (1896). There was a delightful child study in 1892, "The Little Speedwell's Darling Blue"; "Sweet Emma Moreland" was in the New Gallery in the same year. "The Girlhood of St. Theresa" (1893) was one of his "weak" pictures. "Speak, Speak!" (1895), the well-known canvas which was purchased by the Chantrey Trustees for £2000, was another of the "tragedy" subjects which fails to convince. Its meaning is obscure. What is this figure, which is neither fully material nor fully "spirit," which appears to the distraught man who has been reading over love-letters of bygone days? Mr. Spielmann related his difficulty in this respect to the painter and told him that he could not determine whether "the luminous apparition were a spirit or a woman of flesh and blood." Millais replied, "That is just what I want. I don't know either, nor"—pointing to the picture—"does he."

The same year he contributed to the New Gallery Exhibition "Time, the Reaper"—a peculiarly significant picture it proved, for in the lapse of but little more than a year, Millais himself was to be mown down by the hand of the Silent Reaper. "St. Stephen" also was shown in 1895 at the Academy —together with "A Disciple." Both pictures were acquired by Sir Henry Tate and are now in the Millbank gallery.

In January, 1896, Lord Leighton, President of the Royal Academy, died, and on February 20, Sir John Millais was duly elected in his stead. Leighton had been taken ill in the spring of the previous year and Sir John had deputized for him as president, but even then Millais had fears for himself. His throat had been troubling him for a very long time, and his voice by now was seriously affected. After his election he continued to fulfil the duties and even acted as chairman of the Selecting Committee, but he was evidently struggling against increasing weakness. He lingered until August 13. A week later he was laid to rest in "Painter's Corner," St Paul's Cathedral. It is a glorious little company there—Christopher Wren, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir Thomas Lawrence, Benjamin West, Opie, Fuseli, Leighton—and Millais.

# CHAPTER XIII

## The Painter of Children

MILLAIS was once taunted by a critic with casting aside the great artistic themes of the Pre-Raphaelite days for the sake of painting pretty girls that would catch the eye of the public, and the newspapers publish, thereby overlooking the fact—supposing he was impelled by some such unworthy motive—that in so doing he was choosing the most difficult subjects that he could possibly have done. Pictures of children—whether portraits or subject pictures—are acknowledged by all artists to be the most trying, the most tricky, and the most unsatisfactory to paint. In no direction is success more elusive to grasp, and few painters there are who have achieved it. Reynolds—bachelor though he was—really understood children, and is to be reckoned chief among the great artists of England as a painter of children. Romney only attempted a few such pictures, and attained a high level of success; he might have done more had Lady Hamilton not obsessed him. Gainsborough, in his rustic children, captured something of their beauty and character, but it was but seldom he painted a child subject as such. Lawrence's children are totally unchildlike—they are but juvenile editions of his "pretty" men and women. The heavy clodlike children of Webster, Mulready, Hunt, and Collins have none of the attractive qualities which are the natural birthright of *all* children whether they be born to squalor or velvet and gilt. Next to Reynolds, it is Millais to whom we turn among English painters for the true rendering of the child in art.

From the first he had a fondness for children—*as* children. In his early years it is true he did not trouble about *beautiful* children in his paintings, in fact, he was accused of deliberately choosing ugly, or at least, *plain* children. He, nevertheless, invested them with the *spirit* of childhood, and thereby gave them the attractiveness which is inherent in children, whether the physical appearance be delightful or otherwise. The child in "The Order of Release" for instance, is, judging from the little we can see of the

face, not beautiful, but its attitude of sleepiness, its expressiveness of contentment in its mother's embrace, combine to give it that indefinable beauty which pertains to all sleeping children.

Millais must have observed the ways of children long before he had a family of his own from which to make intimate study of the whims, fancies, petulancies, endearments, and unconscious fascinations which go to make up child-character. There is in that shy condescension exhibited by the little patrician in "The Woodman's Daughter" as he offers the strawberries to "poor Maud," sufficient evidence of itself of this early knowledge of child-character—and also of his skill to express it on canvas.

So with all the early works in which children figured—"The Carpenter's Shop," "The Return of the Dove," "The Blind Girl," "Autumn Leaves"—it was the expressiveness of childhood in attitude, in gesture or unconsciousness of pose that he painted, rather than beauty of feature; it was child-character that he seems to have sought after rather than mere prettiness. Only in the sleeping child in "The Random Shot" (1855) is there a suggestion of prettiness, but even there it is the pathetic attitude of the child—the pillowing of the head on one arm—that appeals first for notice, not the prettiness of the face. The little boy clinging to the knight in "Sir Isumbras" was described by Mr. Benson, the owner of the picture, when Millais made his final repainting on it, as "adorable," and he certainly is prettier than the girl on the saddle-bow, who sits in open-eyed awe of the knight.

It was with "My First Sermon" and its companion picture, in 1863, that Millais began the long series of child pictures which will always be associated with his name—that is to say, when his own children were getting old enough to serve him as models and suggest subjects to him. His daughter Effie sat for this delightful little figure, while the old church at Kingston-on-Thames —where Millais's father was then living—provided the setting.

In the same year "The Wolf's Den" was painted, and served to introduce his four children, two of whom are partly enveloped in a skin rug. "Leisure Hours" (1864) is a delightful representation of Sir John Pender's two little daughters, delightful despite the hideousness of the frocks which they wear, although of course, Millais must have revelled in painting the red velvet of them.

"Just Awake"—or as it is more generally known, "Waking"—was painted in 1865, but not exhibited until 1867, the first of a little series of pictures of

children a-bed. Millais's daughter Mary was the model in this instance. Both in this and its companion work, "Sleeping" (also exhibited in 1867), the painting of the white bed coverlet was remarkable for its quality. His daughter Alice was the model for the second picture. Millais was just passing from his Pre-Raphaelite period, and he could still find delight in painting details in precise verisimilitude. Mr. J. G. Millais records that the children were exact portraits of his sisters, and without the slightest idealization. He also relates how they as children, hated to serve as models. "It was so horrid," one of his sisters said, in relation to one of these "bed" pictures, "just after breakfast to be taken upstairs and undressed again, to be put to bed in the studio."

"Waking" was nearly ruined in the making, for the little model being left alone for a few minutes and getting bored with sitting up seraphically in bed, slipped out and did some painting on the canvas on her own account. When Millais returned he was horrified to see streaks of brown paint on the lower part of the picture, which were explained by the "model" as her attempt to help him by painting in the brown floor which she knew he wanted to put there. Mr. Millais says that his father, "with his characteristic sympathy with children never said a word of reproach to little Mary," but set to work to undo the mischief.

Some years later (1875) two more pictures of this character were painted under the title "Convalescent"—one of which hangs in the Aberdeen Gallery. It is much more "free" in technique, but none the less charming as a study of girlhood. "The Minuet," another picture of 1867, is one of his most delightful child-studies, painted from his daughter Effie, and representing her in a dress of his favourite colour—for painting purposes—red.

"A Souvenir of Velasquez" (1868) is the first of several pictures that were painted in direct emulation of Old Masters. It is in the arrangement and method of painting that it is a "Souvenir of Velasquez"—the child herself is unmistakably English, but the picture as a whole is distinctly reminiscent of the portrait by the Spanish painter of the Infanta Margarita Maria in the Wallace Collection.

Reference has already been made to the beautiful painting of the child in "A Flood" (1870), but as a point of interest it is curious to note that its uplifted arms are very similar to those of the triumphantly painted infant

that lies on the lap of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, in Reynolds's wondrous portrait of her.

In 1878 "The Princes in the Tower" was shown at the Academy, and although the background was painted from sketches made in the "Bloody Tower," the picture is quite unconvincing in its presentation of what might have happened had the legend of the unhappy princes been an actual historical event. The work now hangs in the Royal Holloway College, Egham, the founder of the college having paid £3990 to become its possessor. At the college, too, is the companion picture to this, painted in 1879, of "The Princess Elizabeth." Miss Sophie Millais posed for this pathetic little figure, writing her letter to the Parliamentary Commissioners, in which she begged that her own servants might not be taken from her and that she might be allowed to join her sister, the Princess of Orange. She was then a prisoner in the Tower, but was soon sent to Carisbrooke Castle where she died. The old wardrobe which serves as background to the figure was actually once the property of Charles I. It was purchased by Millais from a dealer who had secured it at the sale at Theobalds.

In 1879 "Cherry Ripe," the first of the series of single-figure pictures of pretty children came into being. It was painted from Miss Edie Ramage, a niece of Mr. Thomas, the editor of *The Graphic*, in a costume which she had worn at a fancy-dress ball, as an impersonation of Reynolds's "Penelope Boothby." The picture was a commission from the proprietors of *The Graphic* (1000 guineas was paid for it), and was issued as a colour supplement to that journal in 1880. It has been stated that over 600,000 copies of this print were sold and found their way into the most remote parts of the world. The picture was also engraved by Samuel Cousins, and this reproduction proved equally popular. Mr. J. G. Millais states that from "Australian miners, Canadian backwoodsmen, South African trekkers and all sorts and conditions of Colonial residents, came to the artist letters of warmest congratulation, some of which stirred his heart by the deep emotion they expressed."

A trio of pictures were painted in 1881, "Sweetest Eyes were Ever Seen," "Cinderella," and "Caller Herrin'," and were the outcome of a lucky chance concerning the model. One of the artist's daughters saw her at the theatre taking a child's part in "Good Fortune," and was so taken with her beauty that she persuaded her father to go and see her. She proved to be the

## GLEN BIRNAM

*Painted* 1891. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy*, 1891.
*In the City Art Gallery, Manchester.*

granddaughter of Buckstone, the comedian. Of "Caller Herrin' " Ruskin declared, "The highest of all yet produced by the Pre-Raphaelite school," but Millais had long since forsworn Pre-Raphaelitism, and the picture in no sense followed its tenets, save that it was an actual portrait of Miss Beatrice Buckstone who posed for the part of the fishing girl.

"Pomona"—a painting of his niece, Margaret—was in the Academy of 1882, and then in 1884 came "Little Miss Muffett," "Perfect Bliss"—one of his most strongly painted child studies—"A Message from the Sea," and "An Idyll" to which reference has already been made. Mr. Spielmann has pointed out in connexion with "Little Miss Muffett" that the lower part of the figure bears a likeness to Reynold's "Age of Innocence" in pose and attitude.

In 1884, too, was painted one of his most successful child portraits, that of Lady Peggy Primrose, the youngest daughter of the Earl of Rosebery. It was hung in the Academy of 1885 as a pendant to Leighton's portrait of her sister, Lady Sybil.

"Bubbles" (1886) has been dealt with in a previous chapter; the same year saw a beautiful study of a girl, entitled "Lilacs."

Passing on to 1887, there was an attractive portrait of two children—son and daughter of Mr. Frederick Phillips—in Highland costume, exhibited under the title of "Twa Bairns." "The Little Speedwell's Darling Blue," exhibited in 1892, was the last of the series of such pictures and is probably one of the most delightful. "The Girlhood of St. Theresa," of 1893, his final child subject was the least inspired and least satisfactory of all.

There is but one other picture which demands notice here and that is the portrait of the Hon. John Neville Manners shown at the Academy in 1896. It is noteworthy as it affords another example of the artist deliberately inviting comparison with the work of another painter. The arrangement of this portrait is almost identical with Lawrence's "Master Lambton," although the obvious idealization by the older master of his subject is scrupulously avoided—as we should expect.

From this record of Millais's work as a painter of childhood it can be gathered that he painted such pictures because they appealed to him: he loved beauty and he loved children: and in all his later works, without exception, he expressed these two affections in his paintings of child-life. His Pre-Raphaelite experience had grounded in his nature a fundamental

regard for truth, and when he painted a child-picture—whether as a subject or a portrait—this regard for truth impelled him to paint his model *to the life*. There was no idealization to obtain meretricious effects of expression : his presentations of "the child" without exception, were child*like* : they were not miniature men and women; the character and simplicity of childhood were preserved, and that is why his best work in this direction will live beside that of Reynolds. Millais, like his great predecessor in the presidential office, painted the children of his day and generation—English children. If, again, they were like those of Reynolds, children of refinement, of good circumstance—as they mostly were—it was because they were the nearest to his hand, the most convenient for his purpose.

In the course of an interview Millais once expressed himself in these words on the question : "I should like very much to paint a large devotional picture having for its subject 'Suffer little children to come unto Me,' I should feel the greatest delight in painting it, but the first question that occurs to me is, what children do we care about? Why, our own fair English children of course; not the brown simous-looking children of Syria. And with what sense of fitness could I paint our Saviour, bareheaded under the sun of Palestine, surrounded by dusky, gypsy-like children, or, on the other hand, translate the whole scene to England? The public is too critical to bear this kind of thing now, and I should be weighed down by the sense of unreality in treating a divinely beautiful subject."

Of course, his scrupulous regard for truth would have prevented him doing it, but almost while he was uttering the words Von Uhde was doing the very thing in Germany, and the critical faculty of the public here has been strained to a far greater extent than it would have been if Millais had given a practical expression of his desire. But the opinion that it is "our own fair English children" we care about is perfectly true, and whether it be the eighteenth-century "Age of Innocence" of Reynolds, or the "fair children" painted by Millais's brush, the appeal of beauty will never fail to secure whole-hearted allegiance from the great public.

# CHAPTER XIV

## As Landscape Painter

APART from the exquisite little scenes which served as settings for the figures in his early pictures, Millais did not paint landscapes until—as we have already seen—1871, when, with "Chill October" he revealed his full power in this direction. The wood of "The Woodman's Daughter"; the bank of the stream in "Ophelia"; the beautiful background to "Sir Isumbras"; and, above all, the enchanting scene of "The Vale of Rest" had conclusively proved Millais to be a highly skilled portraitist of Nature—that, and something more. For with this close transcription of Nature there was infused into these parts of the painting the "sentiment" of the main subject of the picture—they were not mere "backgrounds," serving but to fill the spaces of the canvas : they were important factors in the whole conception, the execution of which demanded—and received—as much thoughtful care as the figures which they accompanied. The landscape of "The Vale of Rest" indeed *is* the picture; it is the figures that are the accessories. It is the beautifully painted trees, the wondrous light of eventide in the sky that form the poem. They are imbued with the sentiment of the subject. It was no new thing then that Millais ventured upon when he yielded to his longing to paint a picture whose interest should be purely one of landscape, and when he had once chosen his scene, and decided the conditions under which it should be recorded, the power to translate it on canvas was there ready to respond to the artistic desire.

"Chill October" was born of the love of the artist for this backwater of the Tay, and this love is evident in every touch of his brush. This it is that makes it something more than a mere "portrait" of the scene. He has embodied in the picture, the atmosphere, the spirit of this somewhat cheerless countryside. True, the trees, the reeds, and sedges are painted to look as they actually were—that the whole scene can be recognized by those who know the locality—but surely the artist is not to be condemned for that? It needed the artistic mind and eye to select the particular vista that would

make the picture; and it certainly required the talent of the artist, as well as the skill of the craftsman, to imbue the painted representation with the seasonal spirit which then prevailed. It is "Seggy Den" on the Tay without question; but it is "Seggy Den" in October. There is wind among the trees and sedges, there is the chill breath of autumn—evident without the suggestion given by the title; one realizes that such is not the outcome of mere craftsmanship in painting—it is surely something greater than that?

So in all the best of his landscape work; realistic in its faithfulness to Nature, it yet appeals with that "something more" that mere realism in painting never secures.

"Composition" as interpreted by the landscape painters of Millais's early days certainly never appealed to him: he painted a scene as he saw it without any desire to improve upon Nature's arrangement. To make a "design" of it, to distort a tree to get an "effect," to idealize it—as Turner so often did—out of all recognition did not enter into his scheme of work at all. But is he any less of a landscape painter than Hobbema with his "Avenue," or Constable with his Suffolk pictures, which even yet are recognizable "portraits" of the actual scenes?

He painted two other landscapes in 1870—"Flowing to the Sea" (already referred to on page 120) and "Flowing to the River," the latter of which appeared in the Academy the following year. This was also painted from a scene on the Tay about four miles below Perth, and the figure interest was given by a man fishing.

"Scotch Firs (The Silence that is in the lonely Woods)," a large upright picture, was shown in 1873 and remains a supreme example of the artist's power in the drawing and painting of trees. The sombreness of the "lonely wood" is accentuated by the contrasting brilliance of the luminous sky. "The Fringe of the Moor" and "The Deserted Garden"—both shown at the Academy in 1875—were painted in the autumn of the previous year. The former was taken from a corner of Perthshire, "close to the Loch Kennard march." It was a favourite spot of the artist, famous for blackcock, and he painted it with zest on a large canvas (53″ by 85″). It is a wondrous view of open country with gorse and heather, fern, broom, and trees, with a gorgeous sky with rolling cumulus clouds. One crabbed critic described it as an instance of "motiveless veracity, except for the natural history class," but *The Athenæum* said, "There is nothing in the exhibition to surpass this

work." It emphasized Millais's wonderful perception of colour in Nature, of his skill in representing that colour in paint—gifts that are possessed by few. The late H.W.B. Davis, R.A.—himself a landscape painter of no mean ability—was unstinted in his praise of Millais's work of this kind. He wrote, "He holds in landscape art, indeed, a position that is quite unique. His was a new conception of that art. Nothing quite like it had ever been attempted before, certainly no attempt had ever been so realized; and I am acquainted with nothing in the whole range of landscape art, old or modern (and I am tolerably familiar with all that has been done of note in that art either at home or abroad) that at all approaches his work in certain qualities that are quite his own. At all events, in these qualities of the landscape painter, Millais's position is unique: that is from his own, the absolutely sincere and realistic, point of view. . . . His acute sense of colour—I prefer to say correctness of tint—never seemed to fail him: the resources of the palette were ever ready at his command. He could not, it would seem, see tints, however subtle, incorrectly, or be at a loss to represent them on canvas; and this power, which he had, no doubt, cultivated to the utmost (the colour gift itself is innate) is particularly evident in his landscapes."

"The Deserted Garden" was in direct contrast to "The Fringe of the Moor." Instead of the joyous open-airness of the latter there is sadness and joylessness. The verse of Campbell's, "Written on visiting a scene in Argyllshire" :—

> " Yet wandering, I found on my ruinous walk,
> By the dial-stone aged and green,
> One rose of the wilderness left on its stalk
> To mark where the garden had been."

formed its sub-title and so accurately describes the picture that it can be visualized by reading these lines. There is the old sun-dial in a riot of wild growth, the garden boundaries are beaten down and merely merge into "the desert" around. A hare among the grass at the base of the sun-dial gives force to the idea of solitude.

"Over the Hills and Far Away," painted in 1875, and seen at the Academy the next year, was another notable landscape. The valley of the Tay —country so well known and loved by the painter—again provided the subject. Once more it is a vast expanse of view that is depicted—as the title would suggest. In the foreground is Rohallion Moor, to left and right are

the rising ground of the slopes of Kinnaird and the Duke of Atholl's covers of Ladywell respectively. Far in the distance the Tay runs as a silver thread, and beyond it rises the summit of Ben-y-gloe. For six weeks he sat and painted the scene unfolded before him, with a rough hut, knocked together by a village carpenter, as shelter against weather vagaries. It is Nature pure and simple : there is no suggestion of studio problems of lighting—it bears unmistakable evidence of its out-of-door origin, a quality that is conspicuous by its absence in much of the work of latter-day landscape painters, whose main apparent object is to paint pictures as far removed from Nature as possible.

"The Sound of Many Waters" was painted late in the season of 1876, and Mr. J. G. Millais, in his published letters of his father, enables us to realize something of the difficulties to which Millais exposed himself as a painter from Nature. The scene of this picture is the left bank of the River Bran, immediately above the fall where it is spanned by the Rumbling Brig near Dunkeld. He did not begin the work until late October, and the season was an exceptionally bad one, with heavy storms and snow at frequent intervals. Writing on November 9 to his daughter, he records :—

"I fear that after all I shall have to give my work up and finish it next year, as there is nothing but snow over all. . . . I have been in my hut this morning, and I hoped a blink of sun would thaw the snow sufficiently on the foreground rocks to enable me to get on, but the storm is on again . . . everything is hidden with a white sheet."

Five days later he wrote again : "This picture is full of vicissitudes. I recommenced work yesterday and got on wonderfully, but required water; and it has come with a vengeance to-day : and again I am trembling for the safety of my hut as it is submerged at this very moment—a perfect deluge, and likely to continue all night. . . . The labour in this painting is certainly *much greater* than in any I have yet done, and it will be very thoroughly carried out." The hut was finally washed away, and smashed among the rocks, but fortunately the picture, which had cost the artist so much, was rescued just in time. The weather changed suddenly and he was able to finish the work, which duly appeared in the Academy the following year.

"St. Martin's Summer" was shown in 1878, and "Urquhart Castle" in 1879, a picture painted immediately after the death of his son George the previous year, a great sorrow which undoubtedly adversely affected his work.

## ST. STEPHEN

*Painted* 1895. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy*, 1895.
*In the National Gallery British Art.*

Some years now elapsed before another landscape picture was shown; it was not until 1887 that with "Murthly Moss" he proved that his love for Perthshire and his ability to paint its beauties were strong as ever. It was a scene such as he delighted in, and the sedges and grasses are rendered with a care that is almost Pre-Raphaelite. Beyond the marshy ground, which extends right across the front of the picture, are trees, with hills in the far distance. It is "a solitude," Nature stark and unadorned, save by the beautiful light which floods the picture and renders it one of his most delightful landscapes.

"Christmas Eve"—his first snow landscape—was painted in 1887, and represents Murthly Castle. It was actually finished on the day that gave the title to the picture.

"Murthly Water" and "The Old Garden" were painted in the autumn of 1888, and two years later in the same season, "Dew-Drenched Furze" was painted under the inspiration of a bright November morning. It was a problem such as he delighted to tackle, bristling with difficulties, and challenging every atom of his skill. To interpret this dazzling brilliance of sparkling moisture in paint was a task that few would have ventured, but so far as that is concerned Millais achieved complete success. If he had left it there all would have been well, but he wanted to introduce "life" into it and decided to paint a pheasant in the immediate foreground. Mr. J.G. Millais tells of the infinite trouble that wretched bird gave the artist; he assisted his father all he could; he caught a pheasant and caged him to act as model; he even painted a bird himself on the canvas in the position his father wanted it—and he is without a question, the finest wild game bird painter of modern times—but it didn't "come." His father repainted it, and, of course, the bird secured the condemnation of the picture by the critics: nothing else counted; the bird was an offence to the exclusion of all else. Another instance of over-care spoiling the work.

"Lingering Autumn," and "The Moon is up, and yet it is not Night," both painted in 1890, were again based on the scenery around Murthly, which had continual fascination for the artist. "Glen Birnam" (1891) and "Blow, blow thou Winter Wind" (1892) were two efforts at snow painting; both successful efforts too. The latter was carried out immediately after the catastrophe of a fire at the house, "Newmill," which Millais had leased for some time. The place was utterly destroyed, and in the middle of a

January night the family had to turn out into the snow and take shelter in a neighbouring farm. One of the first things to be saved from the flames was a picture Millais had just finished, the "Halcyon Weather," which appeared in the Academy the same year (1892).

It was to occupy his mind after the fire that the picture, with Shakespeare's lines for its "text," was painted.

> " Blow, blow thou winter wind;
> Thou art not so unkind
> As man's ingratitude."

The scene is full winter and represents a view from Kinnoull Hill, through which a river winds away in the distance. Seated by the roadside is an ill-clad woman with a child by her side. A man is walking away from them—obviously abandoning them in their misery. There is a dog, too—which stands howling, undecided whether to stay with the miserable pair or to follow the man. Mr. J. G. Millais tells an extraordinary story concerning this dog. His father had wanted one brought to include in the picture, and whilst he was sitting painting diligently, a collie suddenly appeared and stood while Millais sketched him in. He thanked the keeper for having procured him so good a model, but the man denied all knowledge of the animal and thought the painter had got it himself. The dog stayed with them for three days, until his portrait was in the picture, and then vanished as mysteriously as he came.

The picture was the finest of Millais's winter pictures—the scene is impregnated with the very breath of winter : a gale beats against the fir trees in full blast, while the snow is painted in a manner that has never been equalled. This picture, and the "Halcyon Weather" were the last of Millais's landscapes, and among his best.

# CHAPTER XV

## As Portrait Painter

AS a portraitist, Millais achieved some of his greatest artistic successes, and undoubtedly his powers in this direction secured him the material success which marked his career. His portraits—as portraits should—unmistakably represented his sitters : they were faithful renderings of the originals. His early training in sketching from life, his youthful practice of Pre-Raphaelite principles, ensured that this should be the case; his belief in "truth to nature" could not be diverted when a portrait was in question. It is the first, and chief, consideration in the value of a portrait, that it is a faithful likeness of the sitter : and it is the consideration, it seems to me, that has influenced all great painters in all times. "The Doge Loredano" we feel certain, was as Bellini painted him; "Philip IV" *must* have been as Velasquez represented him; "The Syndics" were exactly as Rembrandt portrayed them; Dr. Johnson as Reynolds immortalized him, must have been as Fleet Street knew him—it seems an incontrovertible axiom that portraiture should be so. But to many of our latter-day painters it is apparently the quality to be chiefly avoided. The Old Masters—and the best men of the "moderns"—gave us historical documents in their portraits—the ultra-modern exponents of portraiture appear to aim at nothing but the presentation of a variation of their own sign manual; it is their own cleverness they desire to perpetuate, instead of a likeness of the person whom they have been commissioned to paint; they insist on giving a presentation of him, or her, as the artist thinks he, or she, *ought* to appear. So that catalogues of paintings will henceforth have to be compiled somewhat in this way, "Lord Heathfield," by Reynolds; "Sir A—— B——'s portrait of Lloyd George." The painter first—the subject second.

Millais carried on the best traditions of English portrait painting, and if but few of the 150 or so portraits which he painted can be accounted masterpieces there is no question about them all being faithful portraits of the persons they represent. From the portrait of Mr. Wyatt and his grandchild,

of 1849, to the "Sir Richard Quain" of 1896, although as the Poles asunder in the method of their painting, always, without fail, did he give a faithful representation. The surety of his vision and the wondrous skill of his hand never played him false in this respect. At the two extremes of his methods —the scrupulous care of his early years, or the sure deftness of the brush-work of his maturity—there was throughout the evidence of his striving after truth. Or to take two other examples of his work equally dissimilar in execution, but equally ranking as masterpieces of his art; the "John Ruskin" of 1854, and the "Gladstone" of 1879. One the triumph of Pre-Raphaelite methods; the other, the outcome of his life's development. The picture of the great writer standing by the Fall of Glenfinlas is painted with the conscientious regard for truth of detail which Millais was then upholding with all the strength of his youthful ardour. The painting affords a perfect demonstration of Pre-Raphaelite principles; the rocks are flawless from the point of view of the geologist; the flowers are perfect from that of the botanist. The portrait is that of John Ruskin without any question.

The "Gladstone" has no accessories to divert attention from the subject : the great statesman stands calmly, contemplatively; so that all of his generation knew him in his portrait as they knew him in the flesh. As a portrait, it was perfect. But that is not all. As in the case of his landscapes, there is the "something more" that makes it not merely a faithful transcript from Nature, but a great work of art; that something that lifts it from the plane of mere excellent craftsmanship to an artistic creation. The simplicity of pose, but yet noble dignity of the figure, the wonderful flesh painting, the brilliancy of eye—so characteristic of the great statesman—the sense of "liveness" mark the work as one of genius.

Benjamin-Constant, the noted French artist, once expressed himself upon this portrait in a measure of unstinted praise. "The portrait of Gladstone," he wrote, "is a page of history . . . this painting can hold its own as a work of art by the side of the greatest masters of the past. Rembrandt himself could not improve it by juxtaposition; and it is safe to prophesy that fifty years hence, when more than one modern school will have disappeared, this powerful work by a painter and observer will still survive and be more and more admired. Never has life been set on canvas with greater power, nor so large an existence been presented with a touch, a sweep of the brush. We are face to face with the 'Grand Old Man,' living

still, his dreams of statecraft lurking in the depths of his glowing eyes. We feel as we look at this portrait, the deep impression made on Millais himself by this unresting brain . . . it is not the statesman posed for his portrait, it is the man—thinking. We see him as Millais *seized* him, and that is why nothing can come near the intense vitality, the impression left of a still living and breathing being. But to reach this soul, Millais has, as it were, anatomized the body, neglecting nothing, not a bone, not a wrinkle, not a vein, and at the same time, noting nothing superfluous. . . . As we look at this grand portrait of Gladstone we see in it the personality of a great and honest man whose soul was fired for goodness."

The expression of the individuality of the sitter was, indeed, the achievement secured by Millais in all his portraiture. Whether it was a portrait of an old lady, living with her thoughts entirely in the past, as in the "Mrs. Heugh" (1872), or that of a woman in the full pride of her beauty and power, as in the "Mrs. Bischoffsheim" (1873), or of a group of girls budding into youth as in the "Sisters" (1868), there was always this note of individuality, always the unfailing assertion of the personality of the sitter. Whether he was painting statesmen : as the Gladstone portraits, the Salisbury (1883); a brother artist, such as the "J. C. Hook, R.A." (1883); an actor, as in the "John Hare" (1893); or a distinguished physician as in the "Sir Richard Quain" (1896) always was there the individual characterization, the personality, the living presentment.

Never was there superficiality of workmanship, never anything but honest effort to produce a portrait satisfying to his own keen sense of self-criticism, satisfying to that innate conscientiousness that dominated his work throughout his career.

For this, the best of his work as a portraitist will live with that of Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney, for like theirs, his portraits were true and faithful records of the personalities of his day and generation.

# CHAPTER XVI

## The Man and his Views

DURING the last twenty or thirty years much has been written and spoken of the Internationalism of Art; and at various times the question has become as acute in its interest as the various "Internationals" of the Socialistic and Communistic fraternities. It has been pleaded that art should know no nationality, be indifferent to national boundaries, should be regardless of national sentiment and influences. All this has proved as fallacious in practice as the Internationalism of Communism. Racial, that is to say national, influences cannot be disregarded, and an alien art cannot flourish in any self-respecting, well-constituted state. With national feeling neglected, art must needs degenerate into as spiritless, as backboneless a thing as any of the artificial conglomerates of speech which, in the enthusiasm of its devotees, aspires to take rank as a universal language.

A virile art can only be fostered under the influence of national spirit and character, as it has been all through the ages. The old painters of Italy, Flanders, Holland, France, and Spain all worked under such conditions, and their works bear the imprint of the land of their birth. They gained international appreciation, as good art ever will, but always they remained true to their own national inspirations.

So it must be to-day, to-morrow, and yet to-morrow. Art is universal in its appeal, but nationalism must ever be its guiding impulse; must ever be its controlling force and source of inspiration.

Our English School of Painting, founded by Hogarth, has produced artists whose work is appreciated and valued throughout the civilized world; work that is as distinctly English as our climate, or any other national characteristic. And though we have advanced in toleration towards "foreigners" since Hogarth painted his "Calais Gate," yet there is still an overwhelming public feeling in favour of "British" pictures; a lack of regard for the exotic productions of the non-national group of painters.

Millais was British through and through, and his work reflected his ingrained national spirit. He had no abstruse ideas on the mission of art, but he held sturdy, common-sense views on what an artist ought to set before him in his work. He insisted always that an artist must be proficient in drawing, that his ideas must not be hampered by incapacity in this respect. "It is very difficult," he once said, "to understand where the mind of the artist comes in. His work has to be painted, and the highest intelligence is useless unless the man can produce with his fingers what his eyes see, which, with a certain mental distillation, should be at the end of his brush . . . drawing and painting have their grammar, which can be taught and acquired, to a certain extent, like the grammar of speech and music; but beyond that there is very little to be done for a painter—everything *by* him."

He was strongly against the *atelier* system of studentship, believing that each painter ought to work out his own salvation on individual lines. "If I had a dozen young men," he once said, "painting in this studio of mine, the chances are that they would imitate my faults, as a certain French set do those of their master, who, himself, however, imitates nobody. You would have a quantity of young men painting alike and turning out work of the Millais pattern of a kind of average quality. Who are the influential men? The very ones who have worked almost alone."

Imitativeness he always decried; individuality, he insisted, must be evident in an artist's work to make it of any value. He wrote in his note on *Thoughts on Our Art of To-day:* "While we look around and congratulate ourselves on the number of young men whose brilliant talents hold out such bright promise of worthily upholding the English school, we must not forget that only by insistence upon their *individuality* of conception and expression can they hope to advance to the first rank. There is among us a band of young men who, though English, persist in painting with a broken French accent, all of them much alike, and seemingly content to lose their identity in their imitation of French masters, whom they are constitutionally, absolutely, and in the nature of things, unable to copy with justice, either to themselves or to their models. Imitation, however, is pardonable in young men, *and only in young men*, and sooner or later their ability will inevitably lead them to assert their individuality, if they have any."

He was a bold defender of the art of his time, and argued strongly against the slavish adulation of Old Masters to the detriment of contemporary art.

"I am emphatically of opinion," he wrote, "that the best art of modern times is as good as any of its kind that has gone before, and furthermore, that the best art of England can hold its own against the world. . . . To say that the old alone is good betrays great lack of judgment, and is an ingratitude to the living. . . . The only way to judge of the treasures which the Old Masters, of whatever age, have left us, whether in architecture, sculpture, or painting, with any hope of sound deduction, is to look at the work and ask oneself, 'What was that like when it was new?' The Elgin Marbles are allowed by common consent to be the perfection of art. But how much of our feeling of reverence is inspired by Time? Imagine the Parthenon as it must have looked with the frieze of the mighty Phidias fresh from the chisel! Could we behold it in all its pristine beauty and splendour we should see a white marble building, blinding in the dazzling brightness of a Southern sun, the figures of the exquisite frieze in all probability painted—there is more than a suspicion of that—and the whole standing against the intense blue sky; and many of us, I venture to think, would cry at once, 'How excessively crude.' . . . The interior of St. Mark's must have been ghastly when the mosaics were first put up, and the outside could not have been much better. If such a thing were done now everyone would call the man a Goth who did it. But Time has glazed it down into a chord of the fullest harmony. . . . Time and Varnish are two of the greatest of Old Masters, and their virtues and merits are too often attributed to the painters of the pictures they have toned and mellowed. The great artists all painted in *bright* colours, such as it is the fashion nowadays for men to decry as crude and vulgar, never suspecting that what they applaud in those works is merely the result of what they condemn in their contemporaries. Take a case in point—the 'Bacchus and Ariadne' in the National Gallery, with its splendid red robe and its rich brown grass. You may rest assured that the painter of that bright red robe never painted the grass brown. He saw the colour as it was, and painted it as it was—distinctly green. Only it has faded with time to its present beautiful mellow colour. Yet many men nowadays will not have a picture with green in it. . . . God Almighty has given us green, and you may depend upon it, it's a fine colour."

We have already seen how indignant Millais was when a critic once accused him of carelessness in his work. He elaborated this protest against the lightsome way in which some critics labelled an artist with lack of care.

He wrote, "The commonest error into which a critic can fall is the remark we so often hear that such and such an artist's work is 'careless,' and 'would be better had more labour been spent upon it'! As often as not this is wholly untrue. As soon as the spectator can see that 'more labour has been spent upon it,' he may be sure that the picture is to that extent incomplete and unfinished, while the look of freshness that is inseparable from a really successful picture would of necessity be absent. . . . Work should always look as though it had been done with ease, however elaborate. . . . When an artist fails it is not so much from carelessness; to do his best is not only profitable to him, but a joy. But it is not given to every man—not, indeed, to any—to succeed whenever and however he tries. The best painter who ever lived never entirely succeeded more than four or five times; that is to say, no artist ever painted more than four or five masterpieces, however high his general average may have been. . . . For my own part I have often been laboured, but whatever I am, I am never careless. I may honestly say that I never consciously placed an idle touch upon canvas; and that I have always been earnest and hard working; yet the worst pictures I ever painted in my life are those into which I threw most trouble and labour."

"I've painted good pictures and bad ones too," he said on one occasion, "but the bad ones have invariably cost me more time and pains than the good ones. I have never knowingly left a picture as finished which I thought I could improve by more work."

English to the core, honest, and straightforward in his character as in his work, Millais was yet catholic in his taste and appreciation. He it was who drew attention to the fine black and white work of Menzel, Meissonier, and Alphonse de Neuville. He never withheld praise because the work came from a foreign studio, but withal he had a clear cut belief that English art could, and should, hold its own if developed on national lines and sentiment. He had no sympathy with those who belittled their country in relation to art; he would not encourage students to go to Paris or elsewhere—"As if our own School was not good enough! The Academy or the Slade would teach him to paint just as well as any French master if he's got any grit in him."

Of his practical sympathy with his fellow artists Millais gave ample evidence. With Philip Hardwick, in 1871, he founded the Artists' Orphan Fund which developed later into the Artists' Benevolent Fund. It was in his dining-room that the meeting took place between Mr. Henry Tate, Lord

Leighton, and Lord Carlisle that culminated in Mr. Tate's presentation of the gallery and his collection of pictures.

Of dignities and honours that he received the list is a long one, and they were not confined to his own country. In 1878 the Médaille d'Honneur was conferred upon him in Paris, and also the Legion of Honour; in 1882 he was elected a Foreign Associate of the Academie des Beaux Arts and a Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour. In 1882 the German Order "Pour le Mérite" was conferred, and in 1887 he was awarded the Gold Medal at the Berlin Art Exhibition. From Belgium came, in 1895, the Order of Leopold; and from Italy, in 1896, the Order of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus.

From this it may be seen that the appreciation with which his work was received abroad was in no wise niggardly; it gained such by its distinctly British character—the artist was honoured as a distinguished representative of the British School. At home his name and work are still honoured by the great public; and we believe they will continue to be so. The statue of Millais in front of the Tate Gallery keeps the memory of the man alive; his paintings in the gallery—given fair treatment by the Trustees and officials—will never fail to appeal and maintain the reputation of the British School of Painters of the nineteenth century.

In closing this record of a great career no words are more fitting than those Millais uttered when he presided at the Royal Academy banquet in 1895, in place of Lord Leighton, who was even then too ill to attend; it summarized his career; it showed that all the early bitterness against the Academy was forgotten.

"I must tell you briefly," he said, "my connexion with the Academy. I entered the Antique School as a probationer when I was eleven years of age; then became a student in the Life School, and I have risen from stage to stage until I reached the position I now hold of Royal Academician : so that man and boy, I have been intimately connected with this Academy for more than half a century. I have received here a free education as an artist —an advantage any lad may enjoy who can pass a qualifying examination— and I owe the Academy a debt of gratitude I can never repay. I can, however, make this return—I can give it my love. I love everything belonging to it—the casts I have drawn from as a boy, the books I have consulted in our library, the very benches I have sat on."

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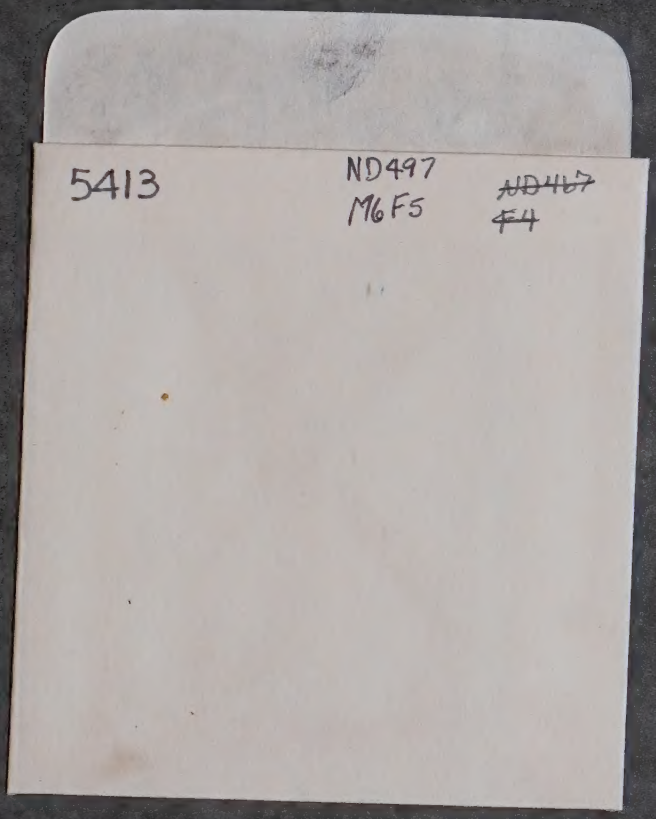
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